CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE:

PERCEPTIONS AMONG SOCIAL WORKERS

by

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ABSTRACT

This paper acknowledges that culturally appropriate social work practice does not take place on a regular and consistent basis by social workers in the field. An aspect of social work practice is concerned with helping individuals, families, groups, and communities in need of assistance for a variety of reasons. This quantitative research study investigates culturally appropriate social work practice in the social work field. Minority persons and groups are prevalent in Vancouver and the South Fraser Region. It is important to appreciate and understand their experiences and respond to their needs through culturally appropriate social work practice. In this thesis, I present the different concepts related to culturally appropriate social work practice, different theoretical viewpoints, and the results of my quantitative research with social workers on this subject matter. I examine the research results in relation to the literature and research. I discuss the responses from the questionnaires that were distributed to social workers to explore their knowledge, perceptions, and experiences of culturally appropriate social work practice.

The research results show that social workers are challenged when providing services to culturally diverse clients. Communication barriers such as differences in
cultures, language, a lack of education and appreciation of culture and diversity, cultural insensitivity on the part of the practitioner, lack of support in the workplace, personal and institutional biases, and system ineffectiveness prevent culturally appropriate social work practice from taking place. The research findings suggest that social workers from the sample are aware of the concept of "culturally sensitive social work practice". However, many of them are not confident in carrying out this type of practice due to the various reasons mentioned above. The social workers state that more specialised training on this subject is needed. I present ideas on how the MCFD can improve culturally appropriate social work practice in the field. The findings suggest that the MCFD needs to be more accountable to culturally diverse clients by providing more in-depth and appropriate training regarding culturally appropriate social work practice to its employees, which includes management, policy developers, and front line staff.
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My interest in conducting research around culturally sensitive social work practice and my goal of suggesting a culturally appropriate approach to social work practice stems from my personal life experience and professional interests. As a minority woman, I have experienced cultural conflict between two different cultures, the Punjabi Sikh culture and the Western/Canadian culture. I am a first generation Punjabi Sikh and my family holds strong cultural norms, values, beliefs and ways of life such as the importance of family, extended families and community, authority based on age, family and gender roles, family and gender roles and expectations, collectiveness, and others. Hallmarks of the Western culture include time, space, individualism, rights, capitalism, progress, production, property, land, democracy, life, and others. As a child I remember observing families trying to adapt to the mainstream Western culture as a result of shame due to the lack of recognition of their own culture by the mainstream. By adapt, I am referring to individuals predominantly speaking English with their families and losing their cultural language, not wearing traditional clothing in public and in the home, and eating Western foods in the home.
rather than traditional Indian food. Canada has been said to be a multicultural society accepting of all cultures.

However, in reality it was a very different feeling. Many families began to take on the values and norms of the Western world losing their own cultural heritage. Consequently, first generation children lost their cultural language, customs, heritage, and much more.

As the number of similar immigrant groups increased in the local community, families began to feel more comfortable with their culture. The community profile information for Vancouver shows that, "there was an 8.5% increase in population from 1996 to 2001, and 324,815 persons immigrated to Vancouver between 1991 and 2001, which was 44% of the foreign born population in 2001" (Canada, Statistics Canada). Families formed close connections with others from the same culture or ethnic background. Today, most families from my culture hold strong connections to their cultural community and there is a great sense of pride that goes along with this.

Furthermore, I chose to study social work ultimately to help people with various needs, problems, barriers, or any other issues in their lives, and further chose to work in the City of Surrey due to its highly culturally diverse population and my desire to advocate for and support that
diversity. The community profile information for Surrey shows that, "in 2001 the population was 347,825 persons and the visible minority population was 127,015 persons" (Canada, Statistics Canada). These visible minority groups include Chinese, South Asian, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Southeast Asian, Arab, West Asian, Korean, and Japanese. The various religions within this population include Catholic, Protestant, Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, and Sikh. "Those who speak another language besides English and French consist of 128,280 persons" (Canada, Statistics Canada). This statistical information illustrates the diverse population at this time and the increasing immigrant population.

As I began working in the field I observed some things that bothered me. Some practitioners were not responding to client needs in ways that respected their cultural background. By cultural, I refer to people's ethnicity, values, norms, customs, traditions, and ways of life, understandings, and knowledge base. I observed practitioners and families feeling frustrated with one another due to the lack of a common understanding between them. I also observed more Caucasian social workers than non-Caucasians carry out non-culturally appropriate social work practice. I assume this to be true as ethnic workers have themselves probably
also experienced cultural conflict, oppression, and marginalization, and thus empathize with their clients. By non-culturally sensitive social work practice, I am referring to not using basic etiquette to convey respect such as not asking the client how he or she wants to be addressed, not explaining his or her professional role or the function of the services that can be provided, not using appropriate language interpreters, not understanding the client’s definition of the problem, using stereotypes or assumptions to come to conclusions about the client, using one’s own values and beliefs to influence the client, using an authoritative approach to practice, telling clients what is appropriate and what needs to be changed, and so on.

Furthermore, during my past four and a half years of social work practice in the community, I have come into contact with large numbers of people from culturally and ethnically diverse backgrounds and worked with various kinds of culturally diverse people. For example, clients with racial, ethnic, sexual, gender, age, and class diversities. The majority of my experience has been with ethnic or non-Caucasian individuals and families. In my observations and discussions with social work practitioners and clients, I learned of the many difficulties such as, communication struggles and disagreements over values, beliefs, and norms
that were taking place and felt by both workers and clients when trying to work together. These difficulties arise from language barriers, lack of cultural understanding, class differences, gender differences, and different experiences. It is interesting to observe how both practitioners and clients feel a sense of ineffectiveness when both parties are not at the same level of understanding. In my own experience, I have observed culturally diverse clients discouraged to access support services due to their feelings of not fitting in. Practitioners sometimes are unaware of the differences between themselves and their clients and carry out practice in an ineffective and oppressive manner.

I believe that social work practice that is not culturally appropriate is unethical and oppressive to clients as it denies clients equitable access to services. From my observations, most social workers have a tendency to carry out practice based on their own values, beliefs, norms, and ways of life, and clients who are different from them are judged accordingly and viewed to be subordinate. Appropriate social work practice is not being carried out when subordination is taking place. I believe that genuine social work practice includes sincerity, authenticity, a common level of understanding of and effective results for clients. Therefore, I am carrying out this study to
understand indicators of culturally appropriate social work practice. Listed below are some of my research objectives and possible benefits of this research project.
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This thesis documents the ideas, beliefs, knowledge, insights, and perceptions of many participants. I would like to thank my professor and faculty advisor, Dr. Frank Tester, my professor, Dr. Carrie Yodanis, and committee member, Kumari Beck, for their advice, guidance, and support. Frank, Carrie and Kumari continuously challenged me to think both critically and creatively throughout my research process. Thank you to the Ministry for Children and Family Development (MCFD) for allowing me to pursue this project with their staff in the South Fraser Region. Fellow social workers in the Masters of Social Work Program provided a lot of encouragement and I thank all of them. I would also like to thank all of the practitioners who provided rich information for this thesis. A special thanks to my family, without whom this product would not be complete. Finally, I thank Rick who has been patient with me all year. He has been my guiding force and my confidence.
"Learning about cultures can teach us how to ask good questions in a way that helps to surface our clients' cultural meanings" (Laird, 2000, 101).

The intent of this study was to gain a fuller understanding of what the concept "culturally appropriate social work practice" means to community social workers, specifically those working in the South Fraser Region\(^1\) for the Ministry for Children & Family Development (MCFD) with the Government of British Columbia. Reasons for this location choice will be provided later in this thesis. The research process was to clarify this much used but poorly appreciated concept by exploring with social workers what they understand by the terms culturally appropriate social work practice. Specifically, this study sought to identify, describe, and discuss what characteristics social workers associated with culturally sensitive practice. It sought to determine if culturally sensitive practice was valued by social workers and if some characteristics were more important than others. Finally it considers barriers to this practice.

\(^1\) Including the cities of Surrey, Delta, and Langley
While there are a large number of research materials on culturally appropriate social work practice, the majority of the research discusses the relevance of culturally appropriate social work practice and does not examine if social workers in the field actually carry this out. Research discusses the importance of culture and explains several theories such as general social work theories, postmodernism, strengths-based, dual, systems, ecosystem, and narrative to discuss it. However it does not describe actual practice (Bogo & Herington, 1986; Boyle & Springer, 2001; Caple, 1995; Chau, 1990; Dewees, 2001; Holland, 1991; Laird, 2000; Saleebey, 1994).

Culture is the means by which people think, act, and ultimately, live. A culture can be individual, group-oriented, or communal (Saleebey, 1994). As a result of the importance and relevance of culture, social workers working with people in the community, who are from diverse backgrounds, need to ensure that their work reflects respect for the client’s culture. Social workers work with people to ensure safety, provide assistance, information, referrals, guidance, advocacy, and counseling. Social workers are working directly with people and accordingly need to communicate, collaborate, make decisions, and provide supports in a culturally appropriate manner.

There is a large amount of reading material around this kind of practice. However, I have observed that this practice
does not take place on a consistent basis in the field. This is through personal observation and feedback from practitioners and clients. As a result, I have chosen to examine feedback directly from social workers in the field to learn of their knowledge, skills, the level of importance given to, occurrence of, and barriers around, culturally sensitive social work practice. This thesis is just the beginning of a search to find ways of improving culturally appropriate social work practice.

The main question I will be investigating is: How do social workers understand the concept of culturally appropriate social practice, and how do they carry this out in their work? Some of the research objectives that arise from this, and possible benefits of this research include:

> to learn about social workers' knowledge of culturally sensitive social work practice;
> to learn about social workers' perceptions of culturally sensitive social work practice;
> to learn about social workers perceptions of skills of culturally sensitive social work practice;
> to determine the importance of culturally sensitive social work practice in the field from social workers' perspectives;
> to determine the extent of culturally sensitive social work practice in the field.
to initiate a discussion of employee development with the Ministry for Children & Family Development because it adds value to social work practice;

- to initiate a discussion with MCFD regarding staff training for culturally competent social work practice;

- to offer social workers an opportunity to reflect on their own social work practice. This reflection process may initiate some positive change around attitude, knowledge, or skills;

- to initiate some positive discussion among social workers, supervisors, or managers, and others;

- to initiate a path for improved culturally sensitive social work practice;

- to provide the MCFD with important and constructive feedback from social workers around the realities of culturally sensitive practice in the field.

I hope to encourage social workers to begin to, or continue to reflect on the concept of culture and their role in relation to it. Only when social workers, managers, policy makers, and educators, reflect on their own cultural values and their social work practice, can a positive move towards social work practice, inclusive of our client’s rights and our ethical responsibility to promote social welfare for all, take place.

In Chapter Two of this thesis, I present various definitions of
concepts related to culturally sensitive social work practice. In *Chapter Three*, I present a basic literature review on this topic including the gap between education and practice, the relationship between knowledge and power, different perceptions of culture, and appreciating difference. *Chapter Four* presents some of the theories that are relevant to culturally appropriate social work practice. *Chapter Five* describes my research process and methodology in detail, *Chapter Six* presents the findings, and *Chapter Seven* is a discussion of the research results. I conclude my thesis in *Chapter Eight*, with a discussion of the implications for clients, practitioners, and the MCFD.
CHAPTER TWO

DEFINITIONS OF SOCIAL WORK, CULTURE, DIVERSITY, CULTURAL
COMPETENCE, & CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

This chapter will provide an overview of the various definitions of concepts related to culturally sensitive social work practice.\(^2\) These definitions are important to discuss as they directly relate to the present research study and effect how social workers understand and carry out culturally appropriate practice. With different definitions, there are different interpretations of the concepts. With different interpretations, there are different uses and outcomes in social work practice.

A definition of the social work profession is that it "promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships, and empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being" (Saleebey, 2002, 234). Utilising theories of human behaviour, social systems, and other concepts, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work. Social work in its various forms addresses the multiple, complex transactions between people and

\(^2\)I use the terms "culturally appropriate social work practice" and "culturally sensitive social work practice" to refer to the same type of practice.
their environments. Its mission is to enable all people to develop their full potential, enrich their lives, and prevent dysfunction. "Professional social work is focused on problem solving and change... As such, social workers are agents of change in society and in the lives of individuals, families and communities they serve" (Saleebey, 2002, 235).

Lum (1999) describes culture as

the sum total of life patterns passed on from generation to generation with a group of people and includes institutions, language, religious ideals, habits of thinking, artistic expressions, and patterns of social and interpersonal relationships (2).

Leigh (1998) speaks of the "myriad of forces that affect every aspect of a person's life and give order to that life" (175), while Devore and Schlesinger (1996) cite group differences in their "perspectives on the rhythms and patterns of life, and in their concept of the essential nature of the human condition" (43). While some of these definitions are vague, all of them include patterns of life in one form or another. While the first definition is exhaustive of various points of culture, the other two are simpler and there is much room for interpretation. Since culture is a large part of people's lives, culture should be a key factor in the helping process. Pinderhughes (1995) asserts, "culture defines the problem perspective, the expression of the problem, the treatment provider, and the treatment options" (131). These
definitions of culture imply that it is fixed, however other writers (Laird, 2000; Rosaldo, 1989; Goldner, 1988) note that culture is not fixed but ever changing with time, experience, and in different contexts.

Laird (2000) discusses some notions of culture. He states that, "culture is performative and improvisational" (103). This refers to culture as being performed. Its forms and meanings are situated and communicated in various contexts for action and interpretation. We perform our cultural stories of gender, ethnicity, race, and so on, as we move through the days.

Each performance, each enacted storying, is both unique and at the same time located in and related to larger social discourses of meaning from which we gather narrative threads, symbols, and ritual possibilities, a combination of tradition and imagination (Laird, 1989, 430).

Laird (2000) claims that we make culture up and we make ourselves up as we go along, forcing our experiences to fit into particular sets of meanings.

Laird (2000) also claims "culture is fluid/emergent" (103). This refers to culture as being contextual. Thus, because no two contexts are ever quite the same, culture is always more or less changing and it is always emerging. Who we are changes from moment to moment, shifting in settings. We are all multiple cultural selves. Laird believes that people change various cultural markers, as well as relationships with various
notions of culture. "Nevertheless, other than skin color and one’s anatomically distinct characteristics, very little about gender, race, or any other cultural category can be interpreted as unchanging" (Laird, 2000, 104). Rosaldo (1989) calls these shifts in context, “cultural borderlands and suggests that they should be regarded as sites of creative cultural production” (36). He also views culture as creative and unpredictable.

Goldner (1988) argues that, “any cultural categorization or identity (gender, race, class, or sexuality) seems more salient at the margins, where there is heightened awareness of how one may be defined as other and deprivileged” (251). He further comments that if one lives on the margins rather than in the center, it is more important to maintain what some have called a dual perspective, one informed eye on the dominant culture and the other on one’s own.

Laird (2000) argues that “culture is intersection” (105). This means that a person is never simply a man or gay or working class. The same person may be, in any one moment, all of these things and much more. Laird (2000) argues that none of these categorizations are stable or fixed and no one is ever one of these stories without at the same time all of the others, although one story, one self, may be more salient in one context and time than in another. Furthermore, there is great intra-group diversity. One can never assume common sets
of meanings within any one grouping.

Another postulate is that "culture is definitional and constitutive" (106). This means that culture is not measurable or generalizable, and it cannot be defined. "Ethnicity, for example, or race cannot be decontextualized and held up for examination, because it is not a thing, an object, it is a narrativized cluster of meanings drawn from the past and present" (106).

Finally, he suggests that "culture is political" (Laird, 2000, 107). This means that people do not have equal voice in shaping their personal narratives, nor do all people have equal opportunities to have their particular stories prevail.

In its most literal meaning, diversity is difference. Cultures differ from each other along several dimensions. One notion of diversity is that it, "emerges as groups coexist, creating a particular dynamic, often involving the dominance of one over others and that each cultural group is likely to retain the distinctiveness that defines it, while at the same time sharing in the lifestyle of the dominant culture" (Queralt, 1996, 30). I believe that to embrace diversity is to appreciate the differences encountered in these dimensions and to challenge critically the claims to dominance displayed by the more powerful. The B.C. Ministry for Children & Family Development (2003) refers to cultural diversity as, "the unique
characteristics that all of us possess that distinguish us as individuals and identify us as belonging to a group(s)" (Cultural Competency Assessment Tool Manual, 1). The literature notes that diversity transcends concepts of race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, and age (Queralt, 1996). Both of these definitions discuss group characteristics; however, Queralt discusses dominance and subordination.

There are many definitions of cultural competence. For example, the B.C. Ministry for Children & Family Development (2003) defines cultural competency as, "the ability of organisations and systems to function and perform effectively in cross-cultural situations" (Cultural Competency Assessment Tool Manual, 1). This definition discusses the concept in relation to organisations and systems. Green (1982) defines cultural competence as, "the ability to conduct professional work in a way that is consistent with the expectations which members of a distinctive culture regard as appropriate among themselves" (16). This definition emphasises the social worker's ability to adapt professional tasks and work styles to the cultural values and preferences of clients. Also, "cultural competence begins with the worker's analysis of his or her own culture and how that culture has influenced his or her own rhythms; this is followed by the development of skills,
knowledge, and finally by a vigilance for new aspects, learned inductively, of the clients’ experiences” (Lum, 1999, 50). Social workers need to “understand how cultures develop and differentiate to appreciate their importance in the development of human organisations” (Compton & Galaway, 1999, 33). A teacher’s guide (2002) that discusses how one can develop cultural competence defines this concept as, “understanding and respecting different cultures and respecting people of different races, ethnicity, nationalities, and religions” (1). This definition does not elaborate on understanding and respecting and assumes that this can be readily done. Taylor et al (2001) assert that, “cultural competence challenges us to develop and deliver individualised social services within a culturally appropriate context and the major criterion is the cultural competence of the provider” (186). This emphasises that providing this kind of practice is a challenge. According to Lu, Lim, and Mezzich (1995), “cultural competency exists as points along a continuum, ranging from cultural destructiveness, cultural incapacity, cultural blindness, and precompetence, and finally, cultural proficiency” (480).

The Ministry for Children & Family Development (2003) uses principles of cultural competence that include:

- inclusiveness, which refers to an organisational system where decision-making includes perspectives from diverse points of view, from within and without the organisation. Reflection of cultural differences refers to the process
of identifying or recognising cultural diversity. Valuing cultural differences refers to the process of regarding cultural differences. All of these principles are demonstrated through organisational statements and policies (Cultural Competency Assessment Tool Manual, 1).

The term "skill" is referred to in this thesis as culture-specific skills and general counseling and working relationship skills, and they are vital to the practitioner's ability to intervene in a way that matches the expectations of the client. I refer to skills as an ability to do something. Some may argue that social work practice require more than skills to carry out appropriate and effective practice. I agree, and other necessary areas include knowledge, insight, ability to empathize, appreciate and understand difference, and others.

Knowledge is conceptually defined as an understanding of culturally relevant case conceptualization and treatment strategies, culture-specific information, and multicultural counselling research...Skills, which cover the behavioural domain, are proficiencies in multicultural communication and in the observation of the multicultural counselling role (Sodowsky et al., 1994, 138).

Several authors have identified the importance of determining and applying specific skills in cross-cultural practice (Gallegos, 1984; Green, 1982; Lum, 1986). Common basic skills include basic etiquette to convey respect, make proper introductions, ask how the client wants to be addressed, and use common courtesies. For example, in the countries of origins of some immigrant clients the social work role is not known and some of these clients may view the practitioner as a government
agent. Therefore, the practitioner should explain his or her professional role and the function of the services he or she can provide. "Minority clients may feel powerless to express their needs to professionals if they feel the practitioner will not hear them" (Caple et al., 1995, 160). Thus, an important part of establishing rapport is being an effective listener and demonstrating attention and interest in the client's communications. "Communication skills include open and closed ended questions, paraphrasing, reflection of feelings and summaries" (Caple et al., 1995, 161). Another skill is understanding the client's definition of the problem. Definitions of problems are culture specific and can be complex.

The multicultural working relationship can be defined as, "a practitioner's interactional process with the client as manifested by the practitioner's trustworthiness, comfort level, stereotypes of the minority client, and worldview" (Sodowsky et al., 1994, 140).

Furthermore, culturally competent agencies and systems are supposed to understand, accept, and respect cultural differences. They involve people who are reflective of the diverse groups in the community, in the development of policies, services, and programs that are appropriate and relevant to them. According to the Ministry for Children &
a culturally competent organisation respects differences and pays attention to the dynamics of difference. They do continuous self-assessment, expand cultural knowledge and resources, and adapt their service models to accommodate needs. Such organisations consult with ethno-cultural communities and are committed to hiring culturally competent employees. They also understand the interplay and influence between policy and practice (2).

These various definitions stress that cultural competence requires more than an understanding of a person’s racial, ethnic, or cultural identity, but that it involves assessing the interactive influence of multiple factors. They imply that social workers must acknowledge and understand these variables and also assess who we are and what we do in our interactions with those we serve.

Boyle & Springer (2001) defines culturally sensitive social work practice as, "an ongoing process that involves the social worker’s development of: (1) awareness of their own cultural values, biases, and position in established power structures and the impact of these on relationships with clients, (2) awareness of a client’s worldview, and (3) ability to develop and implement culturally appropriate interventions" (56).

I believe that a social work institution and its policies and standards of practice reflect the dominant culture and are
in danger of not being effective in cross-cultural situations to promote empowerment and respect diversity. Becoming culturally sensitive is an active process and a process that never reaches an end point. Implicit is the recognition of the diversity of the client and client populations and acknowledgement of our own personal limitations and the need to always be aware and improve.
CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review will present information and ideas that are illustrated in past and present research on the topic of culturally appropriate social work practice.

The notion that cultural competence is crucial to thorough social work practice appears to be widely accepted in the literature (Boyle & Springer, 2001; Caple, 1995; Chau, 1990; Dewees, 2001; Lu et al, 2001; Taylor-Brown et al, 2001). Boyle & Springer (2001) conclude that there exists a gap between education and the providing of culturally appropriate services in everyday practice (53). "Some studies show that these gaps are likely due to the lack of cultural specific training" (Chau, 1990, 249). Boyle & Springer (2001) suggest that the importance of cultural competence for sound social work practice is not well recognised in both social work education and in practice settings. Most schools of social work include course content on cultural diversity; however, cultural diversity course content has not necessarily translated into cultural competence skills for work with diverse client populations (Boyle & Springer, 2001). Boyle and Springer maintain that competence includes the demonstration of
knowledge, skills, and ability in accordance with the following principles:

- consistency (the ability to repeat practice techniques and outcomes);
- independence (the ability to practice without assistance from others);
- timeliness (the ability to practice in a time frame that enhances patient safety);
- accuracy (the ability to practice utilising correct techniques and to achieve the intended outcomes);
- appropriateness (the ability to practice in accordance with clinical standards and protocols outlined within the practice jurisdiction) (Boyle & Springer, 2001, 61).

Consistency refers to being able to carry out this type of practice on a regular basis. Independence refers to being able to carry out this practice regardless of not being supported in the work environment, or being influenced by other factors. Timeliness is similar to consistency. Accuracy refers to carrying out this practice effectively, and appropriateness refers to carrying out this practice in accordance with principles of culturally appropriate social work practice.

Although the literature suggests there is some movement from appreciation of diversity to practical application of culturally competent practice methods, “social service agencies
still rely largely on traditional strategies that may not adequately meet the needs of clients within our diverse, multicultural society” (Carillo et al, 1993, 265).

It appears that cultural competence remains more of an abstract ideal than a measurable outcome of social work education. Services are embedded in methods that are largely “mono-cultural” and insensitive to the needs of diverse ethnic and cultural populations. The traditional training of practitioners and students is based on diversity content that is inadequate for the development of necessary attitudinal, knowledge, and skill changes (Boyle & Springer, 2001, 54).

The attitude, knowledge and skill changes referred to here suggest that the social work profession should not be promoting a single vision approach to practice based on one set of standards.

The literature emphasises the notion that the educational concern for competent social work practice with minority groups is not new (Boyle & Springer, 2001; Bowles, 1988). “Past efforts have tended, however, to focus on cognitive content rather than on intervention strategies or skills and on group powerlessness and oppression rather than in terms of coping strengths” (Boyle & Springer, 2001, 54). In other words, there is more general and vague discourse regarding diversity than on skills of appreciation and understanding of diversity. To observe, listen and say you have learned something is quite different from having the ability to appropriately do
something. Literature stresses that these educational efforts have never become an integral part of educational missions and core curricula (Boyle & Springer, 2001; Bowles, 1988).

An important concept to note in the area of cross-cultural social work practice is cultural pluralism which refers to, "a mutual respect for the existence of cultural differences among racial and ethnic groups, and recognises the cultural strengths inherent in those differences" (Herskovits, 1972, 20). Cultural ethnocentrism on the other hand refers to, "the perpetuation of mainstream culture and values as the single standard against which the merits of other groups are to be gauged" (Kellen, 1956, 18).

These types of concepts may provoke some awareness, but not actual belief and practice of the ideals of cultural pluralism as a basis for culturally appropriate social work practice. These kinds of concepts also demonstrate how ethnocentric attitudes can reinforce prejudicial interventions based on a single set of mainstream standards. Awareness helps social workers to "understand that in solving similar life problems, rather than a single solution, there is a range of answers, all of which are equally viable" (Chau, 1990, 128). The preferred solution is often subject to the influence of a particular culture or worldview and how open one is to difference. Also, sociocultural dissonance refers to, "when
minorities seek to cope with their life situations while under the pressure to conform to the dual, often conflicting or incongruent requirements of both minority and dominant cultural systems" (Chau, 1990, 128). As a result, much of the literature concludes that the extent and adequacy of ethnic minority content in education is inconsistent and possibly ineffective (Boyle & Springer, 2001; Bowles, 1988).

Furthermore, Bogo & Herington (1986) assert that, "the social work profession has taken an imperialistic stance in its assumptions that knowledge and expertise originating in developed countries is universally applicable" (56). An opposing view is that social work knowledge and techniques can only be developed within the local context. (Bogo & Herington, 1986). There is criticism towards the profession for building an ideology too dependent on Western cultural values.

Foucault's notion of the relationship between knowledge and power is relevant in this review as it relates to how cultures are developed as a result of dominant institutions within a particular society. Power is constitutive of our lives; it is through the institutions of power that truth is delivered to us, and it is usually a truth that specifies a form of identity or being. "In most social contexts, current and historical, this dominative truth normalizes diverse experiences for the purpose of maintaining control, sustaining
preferred social arrangements, and making docile the bodies and minds of those who would beg to differ" (Foucault, 1980, 92). Knowledge and power are inseparable, and any power domain is also a domain of knowledge. "We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth" (Foucault, 1980, 93). Cultural norms, values, and all of the characteristics that come along with culture are truths to the people living and believing in the culture.

On the other hand, many practitioners believe these dimensions of human experience and culture are fundamentally important, but have different ideas about the meanings of them and how they should be thought about in practice. "In the ethnicity area, for example, some clinicians have argued that culture is camouflage" (Friedman, 1980, 430). It can be used in families in manipulative or controlling ways, in order to preserve the status quo, bind children to their parents, keep family boundaries closed, and so on. Others like Montalvo and Gutierrez (1983) have seen culture or ethnicity as a, "potential mask that can obscure people's problem-solving modes. By using cultural constraints selectively, the family can pull a counsellor away from reality" (16). The social worker is made to deal instead with a cultural image of the ethnic group. In the process, the client, as simply individuals
having difficulties in solving problems, is lost. These authors believe that if one is simply a good listener, or able to surface the client's structure, rules, and other patterns, what is important about culture will emerge. One needs no special knowledge. This point is important to note as other writers such as Laird comment that special knowledge around the power of culture on practitioners and clients and a cultural questioning process are inclusive of culturally sensitive social work practice.

Furthermore, Laird (2000) asserts that the normative ideas of ethnicity, race, social class, sexuality, and other cultural identities, in which we are all embedded, encourage stereotyping, narrow our field of possibilities, and prevent us from recognizing the dynamic complexity and continuously changing nature of ethnic, racial, gender, social class, or sexual identity and experience (102).

Practitioners need to know how meaning, whether manifested in story, narrative, vision, or language, affects intention and action, feeling and mood, relationships, interactions with the surrounding world, well being, and possibility.

Durst (1994) stresses practitioners need to be sensitive to the communication exchanges they engage in with clients. According to him, clients bring into their relationship with practitioners a lifetime of socialization experiences, so
practitioners need to develop a level of understanding and appreciation of different cultures. “But often, practitioners dismiss the difficulties they experience as simply a culture gap and this reflects poorly on the social work profession as a whole” (Durst, 1994, 31).

However, at times, “culture shock” occurs when there is confrontation with a physically remote and dramatically different culture (Draguns, 1996, 11), which is accompanied by cognitive disorientation and personal helplessness. Generally, cultural tension and conflict may occur when there are differences between an individual’s values and behaviour and those of the society at large (Galan, 1992, 240).

Last but not least, the literature emphasises that to be culturally competent means to know about and to appreciate difference... However, ‘different from’, often means ‘less than’ (Laird, 2000, 101). The ‘different from/less than’ trap comes from always beginning with the dominant experience. “To learn about ethnic group practices and beliefs is to risk stereotyping, and to pretend that there are no patterns is to mystify and disqualify human experience and to perpetuate negative stereotyping” (Laird, 2000, 101). I believe that the power of culture is in shaping the self and human story. It is important for social workers to learn how to access these stories. Listening and questioning in and of themselves are not
quite good enough. Special knowledge is helpful such as regarding diversity, oppression, marginalization, cultural values, beliefs, norms, expectations, traditions and so on.

For example, if we do not learn about our own cultural selves and the culture of the other, it will be difficult to move beyond our own cultural lenses and biases when we encounter practices that we do not understand or find distasteful. We will not be able to ask questions that help manifest subtle ethnic, gender or other meanings; and we may not see or hear such meanings when they are right there in front of us. "Our own cultural narratives help us to organise our thinking, but they can also blind us to the unfamiliar and unrecognisable and they can foster injustice" (Laird, 2000, 101). Learning about cultures can teach us how to ask good questions in a way that not only helps to surface our clients' cultural meanings, but also makes it possible for them to hear their own cultural stories in a newly reflective way. "It is this cultural questioning process, not cultural characteristics, which has transferability across cultural categories" (Laird, 2000, 102).

A majority of past studies concludes that culturally sensitive social work practice does not take place due to various reasons such as lack of adequate education/training and/or cultural bias. These findings are extremely relevant to
my research project because I am further addressing the gap between culturally appropriate social work practice and actual practice.
INTRODUCTION

This chapter will provide a basic discussion of the various theories that have been applied to culturally sensitive social work practice. This includes a discussion of social work practice theories in general, postmodernism, strengths-based, dual, systems, ecosystem theories, and the narrative approach. The vast literature on this subject matter uses all of these perspectives as well as others.

The theories mentioned above address culturally appropriate social work practice and speak to the following: "(1) how ethnicity, social class, and oppression contribute to group identity, coping skills, and problems encountered by minority groups, (2) how group factors interact with individual development, and (3) how inequity is upheld in social service systems" (Bowles, 1988, 1).

Bogo & Herington (1986) state that social work practice theories are, "the theories, models, and principles that social workers use to perceive and define reality; to understand clients and their life situations; and to guide their helping actions" (59).
In assessment, "practice theory concepts are applied to describe phenomenon and arrive at judgements about what is wrong, what the problem is to be called, how it is to be explained, and what changes should be sought" (Siporin, 1975, 95). In North America, social service organizations have agreed upon some assumptions about behaviors, attitudes, feelings and situations that guide their practice theory use in assessment and interventions. However, "many practitioners and researchers have challenged the appropriateness of using these norms in social work practice with individuals, families, and communities from cultures different from the dominant North American culture" (Devore & Schlesinger, 1981, 11).

All societies deal with certain issues such as how society should be organised and governed, how to provide food, shelter and justice to all, how to deal with deviance, the nature of relationships between individuals in the family and in the society, and others. Bogo & Herington (1986) state that, "societies resolve these issues in a variety of ways, and social work practice wherever developed reflects the dominant culture's biases and values with respect to these issues" (60).

In intervention, a range of practice models has been developed to guide practice. These practice models should be analysed by social workers to determine which processes and elements are universal and which require adaptation. "It is
necessary that social work educators and practitioners identify and test practice principles and specify the conditions for their differential use in particular situations" (Bogo & Herington, 1986, 61).

The following are principles to be considered in social work practice: mutuality, trust relationship, communication, and capacity building. Mutuality refers to the worker interactively helping the individual, family, group, or community, discovering available options through an interactive process and collaboratively making decisions in the interests of reaching goals (Bogo & Herington, 1986, 62). In social work practice a trust relationship should be established when clients perceive that they can receive help from the worker. The nature of the relationship between worker and client should take into account cultural differences. In some cultures it may take considerable time to develop a meaningful relationship of mutual trust. "Interpersonal communication is core to all forms of social work practice" (Bogo & Herington, 1986, 62). For example, North American practice approaches reflect the culture's preference for verbal communication and direct expression of thoughts and feelings in problem solving. Social conventions such as location of meetings, seating arrangements, gift giving, and serving food, are examples of forms of communication that have different meanings in different
situations. Also, "all intervention models should attempt to build on the strengths of individuals, families, groups, communities, and organisations to enhance their capacity to function independently" (Bogo & Herington, 1986, 63). The ultimate goal is to assist people in using their own capacities to obtain needed resources.

Social work practice theories include models and principles to guide practice. To attempt to guide practice is a positive thing; however, most principles and models hold specific ideas and thoughts that are based on the dominant culture's values, beliefs and biases. The theories that provide prescriptions towards practice need to be approached with caution, as they may appear to be inclusive when they are not. Practice models may appear to approach social work practice with the goal of clients functioning effectively independently; however, this goal does not take place when a way of life is being imposed on them that is not based on their own culture. Also important to note is that social work practice models and principles should take into consideration those interpretations of culture as being fluid and constructed.

POSTMODERN THEORY

A hallmark of postmodern thinking is its critical stance regarding the epistemological concerns of truth and reality (Witkin, 1993). This point of view invites a critical look at
how a social work organizations policies and standards of practice are developed, by whom, and in who’s interests through an examination of the cultural assumptions that underlie the power and politics behind the policies and standards. It further asks, “who benefits from such arrangements, who is silenced, and whose influence is most valued by the dominant narrative or popular opinion” (Dewees, 2001, 36).

This theory proposes that, “practitioners relinquish the traditional role of professional expert through the recognition of individuals as more appropriate authorities on their own lives and cultures” (Laird, 1993, 80). Practitioners should re-examine existing political interests in terms of their clients’ interests and benefits.

Social constructionism offers a particularly useful postmodern method for understanding social work (Lum, 1999; Witkin, 1993). Considering that realities and beliefs resulting from collective sense-making occur within a social and cultural context, social constructionists examine the meanings their clients give to various constellations of life. “Realities are also constituted through language that creates and perpetuates the shared meanings over time and experience” (Saleebey, 1993, 205). As such, these meanings are organised into coherent accounts or narratives that serve as the vehicle for cultural messages. “Some cultural realities are more valued than others,
thus becoming more dominant, while other perceptions are devalued" (Laird, 1994b, 185). Those without power are forced to accept the meanings given to their experience by those with more power (Middleman & Wood, 1993, 135). Thus, postmodern thinkers such as Witkin, Laird, Lum, Saleebey & Middleman & Wood, suggest there are many ways of knowing and social workers must assume a position of not knowing. In particular reference to gaining cultural competence, the worker should assume the role of a stranger, and post-modern theorists mentioned above further assert that it is the social worker's responsibility to learn about other cultures.

I believe that post-modern theory acknowledges a diversity of values, beliefs and ways of life, thus cultures. This perspective is critical around who develops truth and reality. It acknowledges issues of power imbalances, political issues, and dominant cultural assumptions. It holds the view that people are experts of their own lives and social workers should approach practice as not assuming to know anything about the client, the situation, and what the best approach to improving the situation is. This approach appears to be an effective one for social work practice as it appreciates diversity to a great extent. This type of approach is important in social work practice as practitioners are working with diverse clients. With this approach, social work practice reflects the clients'
world as their realities are within their own cultural and social context. A result of this point of view, every person's truth is valid. It is important to note that this can then result in relativism where truth is relative to the individuals and situations involved. Assuming that all truths are equal, different truths may have no common meeting ground. Further, when people and societies deny different truths and prefer to hold on to their own, fundamentalism occurs.

In spite of these challenges, I find postmodern perspectives useful for culturally appropriate social work practice. The client can be valued as the expert of his or her own life and can be viewed as creating his or her own cultural truth through generations, family, history, personal experience, socialization, and so on. The practitioner can work collaboratively with the client to discover these truths and work towards change.

STRENGTH-BASED THEORY

A strengths-based approach to practice looks to the "client as the expert both in his or her own culture and in his or her own experiencing of the issues at hand" (Dewees, 1999a, 99). This approach helps to bridge the gap that has historically distanced professionals from clients. Saleebey (1997) shifts away from pathology in social work practice, stating that, "(a) every individual, group, family, and
community has strengths; (b) the upper limits of the capacity for growth are not known; (c) clients are best served through collaboration; and (d) every environment is full of resources" (35). In order to focus on educating for cultural competence, "it is necessary to consider alternatives to traditional epistemologies that assume an objective practitioner looking at an objective scientific model for understanding experiences of others" (Dewees, 2001, 38).

The strengths-based approach also appears to be an inclusive and effective one. This theory focuses on the client as the expert, which is similar to post-modern theory. This approach is critical of 'so-called' objective practitioners and practice models. This approach appears to be an effective one because it promotes working with clients based on their strengths through collaboration to arrive at effective solutions.

DUAL THEORY

Another theory that is discussed in the social work literature is the dual perspective that asserts that, "all people are embedded into two, dual, systems, a dominant system of power, economic resources, and status, and a second system of nurturance that consists of family and community" (Boyle & Springer, 2001, 58). This concept reinforces the notion that minorities not only live in the dominant cultural environment,
subjected to its influences, but they are also embedded in their cultural environment. Because of variations of worldviews, values and cultural beliefs, incongruence occurs between the norms and expectations of the two cultural environments.

Dual theory acknowledges that minority persons live in two cultural environments concurrently, one being the dominant one and the other their own. This theory further acknowledges that as a result of living in two different environments, conflict between the different cultures occurs. This conflict can create stress, anxiety, individual, family or community problems. It is important for social workers to be aware of these factors when working with persons from cultures different than the mainstream one.

**SYSTEMS THEORY**

Systems theory views the mission of social work to promote effective social functioning of individuals through interventions directed towards the relationships between individuals and their environment. "A system is defined as a holistic organised unit of interdependent, transacting, and mutually influencing parts within an identifiable environment" (Bogo & Herington, 1986, 58). The theory directs understanding of individuals and groups through concepts such as structure, boundary, and entropy. "There are specific enduring and
transient relationships between and among individuals, families, or other groups, institutions, and society at large and transactions between or among these systems have profound effects on human behaviour and functioning" (Caple, 1995, 165). Systems models explain phenomena in terms of the contexts within which they occur and, "transactions between parts of a system and between a system and its environment in respect to maintaining equilibrium, conflict reduction and resolution, adaptation and change" (Bogo & Herington, 1986, 57).

Systems theory asks social workers to focus on the client and their environment to promote effective functioning. Environment is an important factor in a person's life and it is important for social workers to look at a client's environment and assess how it is affecting the issues at hand. Once the environments impact has been determined, solutions to improve the conflict between the client and environment need to be developed. This theory holds the view that the effectiveness of problem solving depends on the social worker's understanding of and sensitivity to the client's cultural beliefs, lifestyle, and social support systems. A primary emphasis of practice is to empower the client system and intervene in other parts of the ecosystem that create barriers to empowerment. The social worker emphasizes activities based on the cultural strengths of the client system. Empowerment is an important concept as it
means to encourage a person to use his/her own power to make changes in his/her life.

This theory, however, assumes that solutions can be developed to allow for a better fit for the individual and the environment when this may not be the case, and also assumes that a 'fit' needs to take place. Respecting diversity does not promote individuals and groups fitting into things.

**NARRATIVE THEORY**

Another approach that I have found relevant to culturally sensitive social work practice is the narrative approach. This approach is based on the theory of social constructivism. "Constructivism, a school of thought that considers the relationship between knowledge and reality, proceeds from the assumption that persons do not apprehend directly some external reality but rather construct models to make sense of their experiences" (Holland, 1991, 33). The narrative approach holds the view that there are, "two essential characteristics of the human condition that are important for social workers to remember, that human beings build themselves into the world by creating meaning, and culture gives meaning to action by situating underlying states in an interpretative system." (Saleeby, 1994, 352). Practice is an intersection where the meanings of the worker (theories), the client (stories and narratives), and culture (myths, rituals, and themes) meet.
According to this perspective, social workers should open themselves up to a client's construction of their individual and collective worlds.

Culture is the means by which we receive, organise, and understand our particular experiences in the world. According to Saleebey (1994), "central elements of this cultural patterning are story and narrative" (2). Stories contain the big truths about culture, family, and individuals, past and present. Interpretation and stories are the essence of culture. They are essential creations that grow out of the experience people have in particular environments. Stories may instruct individuals on how to survive or how to accept or overcome difficult situations. Stories reveal to individuals considerable information and perspective about the nature of their circumstances.

There are many ways to construct a world of meaning. We will benefit as practitioners if we come to understand more clearly how people and cultures create a world of meaning and what implications such meanings have for how we approach our work.

The narrative approach to social work practice "emphasizes the client's strengths, rather than pathology or deficits" (Holland, 1991, 34). "The relationship between the client and social worker is one of joint exploration and co-authorship, rather than a hierarchy in which one person has
solutions to the other person's deficits" (Link & Sullivan, 1989, 199).

Culture reinforces its patterns on us, and these patterns become embedded deeply within us. "Whatever meanings a culture sustains are mostly expressed in two ways: (1) stories, narratives, and myths (individual and collective versions) and (2) nonverbal communication (the expressions of the body in context)" (Hall, 1981, 14). The narrative approach goes on to assert that because most folk science is narrative, rather than conceptual, we must hear the stories.

A criticism of this approach is that, "it fails to establish a link between individual constructions and the larger environment of social institutions and culture, and fails to examine how any theory of practice is also a symbolic construction or story" (Saleebey, 1994, 3).

Minuchin (1991) criticizes the, "exclusive constructivist reliance on stories because they ignore the social context that may actually dictate the plot of clients lives, the institutions and socioeconomic conditions that determine what they do and how they live" (49).

Social context is very important in everyone's life; however, it is the social worker's responsibility to determine with the client what factors are relevant to the situation at hand and the client's situation. These factors may include
social factors or may not. Stories provide the basis of a client's point of view and can be heard along with examining the impact of social factors to come to possible solutions.

Those using the narrative approach go on to say that, "it is extraordinarily difficult to hear and respect the accounts of clients, particularly if they are in a socially subordinate position (it is possible that the very definition of client implies subordination)" (Saleebey, 1994, 352). The static of our own theories and presumptions, agency jargon, and the informal stories about clients and client groups that are present in the atmosphere of agencies make it difficult to hear with clarity.

The narrative approach to practice also appears to be an inclusive and effective one for social work practice. This approach focuses on a client's knowledge and his/her reality. Reality is believed to be a direct result of knowledge and culture. This approach places a large focus on culture. This is important, as culture is a major part of people's lives. As a result of the importance of culture and also acknowledging presumptions and biases of social workers, practitioners are to carry out social work practice by hearing client's realities through their stories that are a direct result of their cultural knowledge and environments. This approach promotes a non-hierarchical, joint, and strengths-based approach to social
work practice with clients.

Overall, I feel that all of the theories and perspectives discussed above focus on valid areas with regards to social work practice. However, I feel that the narrative perspective appears to be an overall inclusive one and most effective. This approach is comprehensive of a client's environment, culture, knowledge, reality, and strengths. It includes clients as the experts of their own lives and promotes using a non-expert role as a practitioner. Social workers, as other people, have their own values, beliefs, biases and so on. A practitioner can try to be objective when assessing or intervening in a situation with a client, however this cannot realistically take place as who we are and what we believe carries out in our practice.

This approach also encourages allowing clients to speak their stories. People's stories include their values, beliefs, norms and culture. By hearing client's stories, practitioners and clients are able to develop effective solutions based on what clients already know and their abilities. This method uses client's strengths and collaboration when working with clients.

This perspective is also aware of the realities and negative effects of dominant groups on subordinate groups. Dominant groups impose their values, beliefs and norms on those less powerful and this can lead to conflict with the external environment, identity issues, and other negative outcomes. It
is important for social workers to acknowledge possible subordination affects and issues with clients as it demonstrates respect of a client’s experiences.

On the whole, this perspective ultimately respects cultural diversity and people’s knowledge, skills and abilities, which contributes to making social work practice culturally appropriate.
CHAPTER FIVE

METHODOLOGY

This research study is classified as an explanatory study because my aim is to explain the application of culturally sensitive social work practice in the field. My research questions include, "Is the concept of culturally sensitive social work known to social workers? Is this type of practice carried out by social workers? If so, how, and if not, why not? What factors affect culturally sensitive social work practice?

SAMPLE

My blanket sample consisted of 107 (n=107) social workers working for the Ministry for Children & Family Development. Social workers from the South Fraser region in Vancouver, B.C., were selected to complete my questionnaire due to its highly ethnically/culturally diverse population. My sample is my population as I distributed the questionnaires to specific social workers, from the child protection, family service, aboriginal and youth teams, in the South Fraser Region rather than taking a random sample of social workers from the 107 social workers from these different teams. I received permission from the Ministry for Children & Family Development to distribute the questionnaires. The social workers were asked
to participate voluntarily in the research project and consent forms were distributed. Of the 107 questionnaires distributed, 66 were returned.

Individual social workers are my units of analysis. I am using individual social workers and their knowledge, perceptions, and role ideas of culturally sensitive social work practice to determine relationships among variables of culturally sensitive social work practice. My independent variables are all of those factors that can have an influence on culturally sensitive social work practice such as, age, gender, education level, years of post-graduate social work experience, cultural/ethnic background, values, ideas, and others. My dependent variable is culturally sensitive social work practice since it is influenced by these types of indicators.

It is important to be aware that the 66 respondents do not constitute a representative sample. It is unclear who the forty-one social workers are that did not respond to the questionnaire. It may be persons who are not interested in this subject matter and did not want to take part in this research study. Or it may be that these people were interested in this subject however did not have the time or make the time to be a part of the research project. Or these people may be reluctant to take part in the questionnaire due to not feeling safe or
confident to do so. The questionnaire's cover letter notes that taking part in the research project is voluntary and responses are confidential, however some people may not trust this. The people who did respond to the questionnaire may want to discuss this subject matter, want to make known their agreements and disagreements, and want to voice their thoughts.

**DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

The Questionnaire

A questionnaire was used as the measurement instrument because I am interested in determining the extent to which respondents hold particular knowledge, attitudes and skills about culturally sensitive practice. This would not have been possible without using a survey instrument method. Other methods of gathering data such as completely relying on qualitative means and interviews with social workers would not have been plausible for me, as this method would not have provided me with a large enough sample size. Due to the sensitive nature of my topic, and personal values and biases, participants may have been reluctant to state their perspectives through interviews. The questionnaire allows participants to respond to the questions, as well as provide additional comments, in a safe place and in confidence.

"Survey research is perhaps the most frequently used mode of observation in the social sciences" (Rubin & Babbie, 2001,
Surveys may be used for descriptive, explanatory, and exploratory purposes. Surveys are mainly used in studies that have individual people as the units of analysis. Survey research is one of the better methods available to researchers who are interested in collecting original data to describe a population that is too large to observe directly. Surveys are also excellent vehicles for measuring attitudes, knowledge, and skills in a large population (Rubin & Babbie, 2001, 361). All of these factors apply to my study.

A questionnaire is also relatively simple and feasible. I believe that it is an effective way to examine a topic with a reasonable sample size and analyze the responses for specific correlations and findings. A researcher may not receive so much information about the topic due to the limitations of a questionnaire, however analysis can occur through standardized testing and then examining the results and finding relationships between variables of culturally sensitive social work practice.

I briefly summarized some of the questions and asked respondents to agree or disagree and/or comment. These types of questions are referred to as Likert scale questions, or ordinal measures, where subjects are asked to respond along a continuum of opinion, to either strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree. Other questions asked respondents to select
and/or rank items. Nominal types of questions were also used where respondents were asked to answer either yes or no. The questionnaire includes both open and closed-ended questions. This self-administered questionnaire was electronically mailed or personally delivered to the subjects. A cover letter accompanied the questionnaire and stated the purpose of the study, ensured confidentiality, and provided my contact information. As the questionnaires were returned, I completed a return rate graph that monitored when I received responses, how my response rate was going, and the success, or lack of, the project. Also, I assigned the returned questionnaires identification numbers for confidentiality and organizational purposes.

I achieved a 62% response rate. I first distributed the questionnaires via e-mail to the social workers. I soon realized that I was not receiving very many responses. I then began communicating with social workers who told me that they did not receive the e-mail, they had deleted it due to not knowing what it was about, or deleted it by mistake, they had lost it, they did not have the time to complete it, and some other reasons. I then decided to personally attend offices and provided the supervisors of the team’s copies of the questionnaires for social workers to complete. The questionnaires were then mailed to me. My response rate was
much better with this method.

Operational definitions refer to the indicators I used to determine the quantitative or qualitative categories of culturally sensitive practice. These variables were measured by asking subjects several knowledge, attitude and role/skills questions around culturally sensitive practice. "Knowledge is conceptually defined as an understanding of culturally relevant case conceptualization and treatment strategies, culture-specific information, and multicultural counseling research. Skills are proficiencies in multicultural communication and in the observation of the multicultural counseling role" (Boyle, 2001, 60). The majority of the items on the questionnaire received a numerical value.

Some operational principles of culturally sensitive social work practice from which measurable indicators were derived include: recognizing the prevalence of institutional and systemic forces in client problems and oppression; engaging in interventions to minimize oppression; emphasizing systems and institutional change approaches, recognizing interaction between systemic and individual factors; modifying hierarchical distinctions in the working relationship to cultural norms of the client; recognizing, acknowledging, and respecting culturally-based perspectives; incorporating ethnic/class/minority issues at all levels of practice, and in
personal and professional relationships; speaking the client's language, etc.

The process of clarifying and specifying competencies can provide the link between the concept of culturally sensitive practice and measurable outcomes with empirical indicators for the use in evaluation of social work practice. By operationalizing specific indicators of culturally sensitive practice through a reliable and valid instrument, social work organizations, and practitioners are better equipped to evaluate teaching methods, assess educational outcomes, and determine practice quality.

I began my survey by asking respondents to indicate items they consider to be a part of culturally sensitive social work practice. I then asked them to rate the four most important ones to them. I provided a list of some items, taken from the literature on culturally appropriate social work practice, and also provided space for other items to be added.

Reliability & Validity

Reliability refers to assessing the quality of a measurement technique, such as the questionnaire, and whether applied repeatedly to the same object, such as the social workers, would yield the same results. To increase reliability, it is beneficial to create reliable measures by asking questions that are not ambiguous and likely to be interpreted
in different ways.

Validity refers to, "a measure that accurately reflects the concept that it is intended to measure" (Rubin & Babbie, 2001, G-9). This means that the questions on the questionnaire should reflect the concept of culturally sensitive practice. Some of them are direct questions about the subject, whereas others are indirect. I am trying to determine if social workers are completing culturally sensitive practice by asking them questions about their knowledge, attitudes, and skills on the subject matter. The questions and indicators do appear to provide some measure of the variable. This refers to face validity.

**Composite Index**

A composite index of culturally sensitive social work practice was created that includes several indicators of this concept from the questionnaire. The purpose of a composite index is to increase the concept's validity by forming an index of measures of culturally sensitive social work practice and then examining its relationship with independent variables. The indicators chosen to create the index include: being familiar with the concept; the importance of diversity in practice; how prepared one is to conduct this type of practice; whether culture is irrelevant at times; whether cultural diversity is important with immigrants due to the Canadian mosaic; whether
working from this point of view is time-consuming and not a priority at times; whether too much importance is placed on culture; feeling supported in practicing this type of practice in a work environment; and whether social workers are well qualified to provide this type of practice. The index provides scores for each participant between 1-4 with 1 showing strong support, knowledge, and skills for culturally sensitive social work practice, and 4 showing a strong response in the other direction of not supporting csswp. I used the index of culturally sensitive social work practice to complete a difference of means test (t-test), regression, anova, and e vs y hat plot. An independent samples t-test was completed to compare means across categories. This test requires a nominal IV and a measurement DV.

LIMITATIONS RELATED TO THE DESIGN

A quantitative study is limited to responses on a questionnaire for feedback on a topic whereas a qualitative research study allows a researcher to speak to participants in depth about a research topic. A qualitative research method may allow for more feedback on areas such as the MCFD’s policies, standards, etc. The current survey instrument, a questionnaire, provided several open-ended areas for further feedback from respondents. However information may be captured differently or better person-to-person as a result of having more time and the
ability to ask further questions and explanations. It was also important to be aware that the subjects may not be able to fully reflect on and state their positions regarding culturally appropriate social work practice through a restrictive questionnaire where there is no open dialogue. Using a qualitative approach may result in more feedback around culturally appropriate social work practice. On the other hand, however, due to the sensitivity of this topic, it may not, as social workers may not feel comfortable speaking about this topic due to personal biases, prejudices or discrimination. Also, I initially thought that the questionnaire would take approximately 15 minutes to complete, thus should not disrupt the subject's regular activities, however in hindsight realise that it may take longer than this to complete.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

My analysis was ongoing and inductive in order to identify emergency themes, patterns, and questions. I looked for patterns across categories and variables of culturally sensitive social work practice to determine any relationships among the variables. In making sense of the data and providing an interpretation of what I learned, I used my personal knowledge, literature review, theoretical knowledge, and statistical analysis to make assertions.

One of my research purposes was to examine my data to
identify relationships and correlations between variables around culturally sensitive social work practice. My hope was to analyze the received data for correlations, however I had to keep in mind that my questionnaire may not be comprehensive or exhaustive of all of the possible variables or indicators of culturally sensitive practice. I used SPSS to analyze the received data and to determine relationships among the data. I have determined frequencies of indicators of culturally sensitive practice, and examined them individually and in combination with one another. I have completed cross-tabulations through this program to determine individual and combined relationships between and among nominal variables, ordinal, and measurement variables. Cross-tabulations illustrate respondent's having particular combinations of responses between variables. I have also completed some significance testing to determine any possible inferences. Chi-square testing only tells me if there is a relationship between two variables, not the strength of the relationship. I have to be cautious in making inferences, as my sample is not a random one. I chose to carry out some significance testing to add to my research results and provide information for possible future research.

ETHICAL ISSUES

I do not feel that there are as many ethical concerns with
a questionnaire as there are with an in-person interview. The questionnaire was mailed, dropped off and/or e-mailed to social workers and supervisors and were returned to me via mail or e-mail. As a result, one ethical concern is confidentiality. I ensured the subjects that they will remain confidential as stated on the cover letter of the questionnaire. I was not able to guarantee anonymity because some of the subjects returned the questionnaire to me via e-mail, with their contact information disclosed. "In a confidential survey, the researcher is able to identify a given person's response but essentially promises not to do so publicly" (Rubin & Babbie, 2001, 77). As I received the questionnaires, I removed any identifying information and placed identification numbers on them for organizational purposes. Rubin and Babbie discuss a master identification file with the subjects names and responses, however I did not feel that this was necessary in my research because I do not foresee myself needing to be in contact with the subjects in the future to clarify responses.

Another ethical concern is of voluntary participation and informed consent. "All participants must be aware that they are participating in a study, be informed of the consequences of the study, and consent to participate in it" (Rubin & Babbie, 2001, 74). I have stated on my cover letter that the questionnaire is completely voluntary and returning the
completed questionnaire to me implies the subject's informed consent. The consequences of the study would be that others would know the subject's names besides me, the researcher, however, as discussed above, I ensured the subjects that I am responsible for their confidentiality. The personal information requested from the subjects on the questionnaire is strictly for statistical purposes and this is also stated on the questionnaire.

Another ethical concern is generalizability. This refers to, "that quality of a research finding that justifies the interference that it represents something more than the specific observation on which it was based" (Rubin & Babbie, 2001, G-3). There is potential for this in my research project as a result of not receiving a large sample size and responses and generalizing the responses to reflect all social workers. I cannot conclude that all social workers do not complete culturally sensitive social work practice from a small sample. This would be stereotyping and misleading. I had to remain aware that there are different levels of cultural appreciation and competence.

Culturally sensitive social work practice is extremely important to me and I had to be aware that I may not be objective through the research project, for example during the development of the questions or when analyzing the responses.
"Social research can never be totally objective, because researchers are humanly subjective...values can influence any phase of the research process such as the selection of a research question or sample or the definition of a variable" (Rubin & Babbie, 2001, 93). In addition, this subject may be a sensitive one for social workers when they are being asked to reflect on their social work practice with culturally different people.
CHAPTER SIX
FINDINGS

SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

In this first section, I examine the description of the sample. I then examine the sample responses with indicators of culturally sensitive social work practice. I then examine results from some cross-tabulations, difference of means tests, regression tests, and last but not least a chi-square test.

Given that I do not have a random sample, I will be, for the most part, examining the relationships between the variables in my sample and making correlations. In this section, I will be listing my findings individually and will examine and discuss the findings overall in the next section of the paper.

My sample consisted of 66 respondents, 83% female, 26% under 30 years of age, 68% having a Bachelor of Social Work degree, 15% having a Master of Social Work degree, and 17% having another degree. Forty seven percent of the respondents have ten years or less work experience. The majority of respondents, 64%, are Caucasian, 3% Asian, 4% African American, 11% South Asian, 9% other, and 9% had no answer. Tables 6.1 - 6.5 provide demographic information on the respondents.

---

3 Random sample required to make inferences from research results.
### Table 6.1 Respondent's Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency (N=66)</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 30</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 6.2 Respondent's Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Frequency (N=66)</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 6.3 Respondent's Highest Degree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Frequency (N=66)</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BSW</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>68.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSW</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 6.4 Respondent's Years of Post-Graduate Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Frequency (N=66)</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 6.5 Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Frequency (N=66)</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>63.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asian</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SAMPLE RESPONSES TO INDICATORS OF CULTURALLY SENSITIVE SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

The results show that there is only one item, from sixteen, that had a very strong response rate (95%), which is, "recognizing the values, beliefs, customs and norms of a person/family". Items such as, recognizing and using a person's/family's strengths and listening and hearing the person's/family's story, recognizing that a person/family is part of a larger family/community, and recognizing language barriers and using an interpreter, had approximately a 70% response rate. Lower items included recognizing that a person/family may know what is best for them and recognizing that a person/family may experience oppression. Table 6.6 illustrates some of the features of culturally sensitive social work practice and the responses received from the survey based on their level of importance to the social workers in the sample.

Table 6.6 Aspects of Culturally Sensitive Social Work Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Frequency (N = 64)</th>
<th>% Ranked first</th>
<th>% Ranked second</th>
<th>% Ranked third</th>
<th>% Ranked fourth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recognise peoples values, beliefs, customs, and norms</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognise language barriers-interpreter use</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognise a person/family may be part</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of a larger family/community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognise a person/family may know what is best for them</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognise a person/family may experience oppression</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening and hearing the person’s/ family’s story</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognise and use a person’s/ family’s strengths</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not ethnocentric</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledge impact of culture of origin on family processes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How culture is viewed in the community</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority culture?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognise people have ingrained belief systems that are different from dominant culture</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognise people have different cultures to myself</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, a majority of the respondents feel that Vancouver is a diverse city and this is in accordance with a majority of the sample having also worked in another city or town. These other places include areas in different parts of British Columbia, Canada, the United States, and West Africa. A large majority of the sample (91%) is familiar with the
term, "culturally sensitive social work practice". There was no strong response for the question if social work literature was considerate of diversity. Twenty percent of the sample did not answer this question. When compared, 47% of the participants who felt that the literature was considerate of diversity have a BSW and 31% with a BSW said no. I then asked respondents to tell me where they learned about diversity. I provided a list of possible sources and space for additional ones. I found that high response categories, with more than 80%, included books/texts, the work environment, and colleagues. The work environment had an 89% response rate. It is interesting to note that a BSW as a source of diversity had a 58% response rate, especially since 68% of the respondents have a BSW. Also, the response rate for other undergraduate education was 61%. These other undergraduate degrees include, Bachelor of Arts, Child and Youth Care degrees, and others. Training and seminars were in the 70th percentile. Table 6.7 illustrates the various sources and the response rates based on their frequencies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of Diversity Education</th>
<th>Frequency (N = 55)</th>
<th>% ranked first</th>
<th>% ranked second</th>
<th>% ranked third</th>
<th>% ranked fourth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BSW</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSW</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other undergraduate education</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectures/Seminars</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books/Texts</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition, 91% of participants said that cultural diversity is a consideration in their practice. Eight percent said that it is sometimes. The responses for this question and those being familiar with the term culturally sensitive social work practice are similar. I then asked the respondents how important diversity is in their practice and 61% said very important, and 37% somewhat important. All those who said that diversity is very important in their practice also said that they are familiar with the term culturally sensitive social work practice.

I also asked respondents how prepared they felt to complete culturally sensitive practice. Only 30% said they are very prepared, 58% somewhat prepared, and 11% a little prepared. Forty-four percent of the MSW participants felt well prepared and 44% felt somewhat prepared. Thirty-one percent of the BSW respondents felt very prepared and 55% somewhat prepared.

Furthermore, I asked respondents if they felt that non-
culturally sensitive social work practice is a problem in the social work field. Nine percent strongly agreed with this statement, 61% somewhat agreed, and 26% disagreed. Some also had no opinion. I then asked participants if they felt that there are some practice situations where a person or family's culture is irrelevant to the matters at hand. Fifty-six of the respondents agreed with this statement and 43% disagreed. I compared these results with a previous question; if non-culturally sensitive social work practice is a problem in the field of social work. I found that those who strongly agree with the statement that culture may be irrelevant in some practice situations agreed somewhat that non-culturally sensitive social work practice is a problem in the field. Forty percent of those who agreed somewhat that non-culturally sensitive social work practice is a problem also agree somewhat that culture may be irrelevant in some practice situations. Sixty-eight percent of those who disagreed that culture may be irrelevant agreed somewhat that non-culturally sensitive social work practice is a problem.

I then asked respondents if they felt that cultural diversity is important especially in the case of immigrants because people have to fit well in the Canadian mosaic to have a good life. Only 20% of respondents strongly agreed with this statement, 35% agreed somewhat, and 22% disagreed. Twenty-three
percent had no opinion. I compared this response to if their practice is considerate of diversity and found that 93% of the participants who disagreed that cultural diversity is important due to the Canadian mosaic state that their practice is considerate of diversity. I then compared this question with the respondent's years of post-graduate work experience. I found that the majority of respondents who agreed that culture diversity is important have had 10 years or less work experience.

I then asked respondents if they felt that working from a culturally sensitive point of view is time-consuming and cannot always be a priority. Twenty-six percent agreed and 74% disagreed. The majority of non-Caucasian respondents disagreed with this statement. A majority of those who disagreed with this statement have 10 years or less work experience. None of the respondent's with a MSW strongly agreed with this statement.

I also asked participants if they felt that too much importance was placed on culture when discussing case practice in the social work field. A large majority, 93%, disagreed with this and these respondent’s have 10 years or less work experience. Six percent agreed with the statement and these respondents were Caucasian.

I then asked respondents if they felt that assimilation
might not be pursued as much as it used to be in Canadian society. Nine percent strongly agreed, 44% agreed somewhat, 29% disagreed, and 15% had no opinion. I compared this with ethnic/cultural backgrounds. Sixty-eight percent of the Caucasian respondents agreed with this statement. Thirty nine percent of the non-Caucasian respondents both agreed and disagreed with this statement.

I also asked participants if they felt supported in practicing culturally sensitive social work practice in their work environment. Only 27% strongly agreed with this, 59% agreed somewhat, and 12% disagreed.

I then asked respondents if they felt they worked in a culturally diverse work environment, referring to ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, class, education, etc. Eighty-five percent said yes, and 15% said no. The majority of those who feel that they work in a diverse work environment also feel that they are supported to practice culturally sensitive social work practice in their work environment.

Respondents were asked if they felt that social workers are well qualified to provide culturally sensitive practice. Fifty-eight percent agreed somewhat and 38% disagreed. No one strongly agreed with this statement. I then asked participants if they felt that all social workers should receive specialized
training about culturally sensitive practice, and 82% said yes, 12% maybe, 3% no, and 3% don't know.

CROSS-TABULATION RESULTS

Many individual cross-tabulations were completed to observe any relationships between and among variables of culturally sensitive social work practice. For example, I compared the responses to the question as to whether or not Vancouver is a culturally diverse city with the question as to whether the respondents had ever worked in another place; the respondent's education level with whether or not they thought that the social work literature was considerate of diversity, how they learned about diversity, if they felt prepared for practice; if practice was considerate of diversity and being familiar with the concept of culturally sensitive social work practice; the importance of diversity and being familiar with the concept; if non-culturally sensitive social work practice is a problem in the field with being familiar with the concept; and many more. For example, table 1.8 illustrates cross-classifying observations between whether or not practice is considerate of diversity and ethnicity. This table shows that, overall, the majority of the respondents say they do consider cultural diversity to be a consideration in their practice. All of the non-Caucasian persons said yes. The two respondents who said sometimes are Caucasian.
I also completed Chi Square testing between the variables of ethnicity and the question if practice is considerate of diversity to determine any significance between the two variables. As Table 6.8b illustrates below, the assumption for this type of testing, that the expected count is to be at least 5, is not met, thus no conclusions can be made from it. In this test, seven cells have expected counts less than 5.¹

Table 6.9 is a cross-tab of whether practice is considerate of diversity and education. It shows that a majority (89%) of the respondents with a BSW degree said that their practice is considerate of diversity. All of the MSW and other education background participants also said yes.

**CROSS-TABS - DEMOGRAPHICS & CULTURALLY SENSITIVE SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE**

**Table 6.8 Crosstabulation of Practice Considerate of Diversity with Ethnicity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>40 (95%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Caucasian</td>
<td>17 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>57 (97%)</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ I did not complete any other Chi-Square testing, as I did not have more nominal variables that were relevant for
Table 6.8b

Chi-Square Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>.838a</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>1.388</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>.739</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 7 cells (70.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .03.

Table 6.9 Crosstabulation of Practice Considerate of Diversity with Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BSW</td>
<td>40 (89%)</td>
<td>5 (11%)</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSW</td>
<td>9 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60 (92%)</td>
<td>5 (8%)</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.10 shows a cross-tabulation between the level of importance of considering cultural diversity in practice and ethnicity. Overall, the non-Caucasian respondents felt that diversity is more important in practice (76%) than the Caucasian respondents (60%). A larger number of Caucasian respondents (60%) chose the category of somewhat important than non-Caucasians (24%).

Table 6.11 compares the importance of diversity in practice with education levels of the respondents. It shows that overall, more MSW graduates (89%) consider diversity very
important than BSW (57%) or other education levels (64%). This may be because there may be more education around culture and diversity in the Masters level of education or they may have more experience before completing a Masters degree.

Table 6.10  Crosstabulation of the Importance of Diversity with Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>25 (60%)</td>
<td>17 (40%)</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Caucasian</td>
<td>13 (76%)</td>
<td>4 (24%)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38 (64%)</td>
<td>21 (36%)</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.11  Crosstabulation of the Importance of Diversity with Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BSW</td>
<td>25 (57%)</td>
<td>19 (43%)</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSW</td>
<td>8 (89%)</td>
<td>1 (11%)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7 (64%)</td>
<td>4 (36%)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40 (63%)</td>
<td>24 (38%)</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.12 cross-tab compares the responses of being prepared for practice with ethnicity. It shows that, overall, the majority of respondents (59%) only feel somewhat prepared for culturally sensitive practice. The majority of Caucasian respondents feel somewhat prepared (62%) where the non-Caucasian responses are more balanced in both categories of very (47%) and somewhat important (53%). Table 6.13 cross-tab
compares being prepared for practice with education. It shows that more MSW respondents (44%) feel very prepared than those with BSW (31%) or other, education (18%). Also, overall, the majority of respondents feel somewhat prepared for practice (58%).

Table 6.12 Crosstabulation of Prepared for Practice with Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Prepared</th>
<th>Somewhat Prepared</th>
<th>A little Prepared</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>10 (24%)</td>
<td>26 (62%)</td>
<td>6 (14%)</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Caucasian</td>
<td>8 (47%)</td>
<td>9 (53%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18 (31%)</td>
<td>35 (59%)</td>
<td>6 (10%)</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.13 Crosstabulation of Prepared for Practice with Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Prepared</th>
<th>Somewhat Prepared</th>
<th>A little Prepared</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BSW</td>
<td>14 (31%)</td>
<td>25 (56%)</td>
<td>6 (13%)</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSW</td>
<td>4 (44%)</td>
<td>4 (44%)</td>
<td>1 (11%)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2 (18%)</td>
<td>9 (82%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20 (31%)</td>
<td>38 (58%)</td>
<td>7 (11%)</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.14 cross-tab compares the responses for if working from a culturally sensitive point of view is time-consuming and cannot always be a priority with ethnicity. It illustrates that, overall, more respondents disagree somewhat (43%) with this statement. No Caucasian respondents strongly agreed with
this statement and one non-Caucasian person did. Twenty percent of the whole sample agrees somewhat with this statement.

This finding initiates the question, why do some social workers feel that working from a culturally sensitive point of view is time consuming and cannot always be a priority? More non-Caucasian respondents disagree with this statement (89%) than Caucasians (74%). Table 6.15 compares these responses with education levels. It shows that 2% of respondents with a BSW education and 9% of another education than a BSW or MSW strongly agree with this statement. This is not a large percentage of people. Overall, 33% of respondent's disagree strongly, 41% disagree somewhat and 23% agree strongly with this statement. More MSW respondents (50%) disagree strongly with this notion than workers with a BSW (33%) or other education (18%). Also, fewer MSW workers agree strongly with this idea (10%) than BSW workers (24%) and workers with other educational backgrounds (27%).

The percentages for BSW and other education levels that agree strongly are not far apart from each other. The responses for disagreeing somewhat are relatively similar for all three-education categories ranging from 40-45%.
Table 6.14 Crosstabulation of Working from a Culturally Sensitive Point of View is Time Consuming and Cannot Always Be a Priority with Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree Somewhat</th>
<th>Disagree Somewhat</th>
<th>Disagree Strongly</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>11 (26%)</td>
<td>21 (50%)</td>
<td>10 (24%)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Caucasian</td>
<td>1 (6%)</td>
<td>5 (28%)</td>
<td>11 (61%)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>12 (20%)</td>
<td>26 (43%)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.15 Crosstabulation of Working from a Culturally Sensitive Point of View is Time Consuming and Cannot Always Be a Priority with Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree Somewhat</th>
<th>Disagree Somewhat</th>
<th>Disagree Strongly</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BSW</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>11 (24%)</td>
<td>18 (40%)</td>
<td>15 (33%)</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSW</td>
<td>1 (10%)</td>
<td>4 (40%)</td>
<td>5 (50%)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1 (9%)</td>
<td>3 (27%)</td>
<td>5 (45%)</td>
<td>2 (18%)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
<td>15 (23%)</td>
<td>27 (41%)</td>
<td>22 (33%)</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DIFFERENCE OF MEANS TEST WITH COMPOSITE INDEX OF CSSWP

The first test compared Caucasians with non-Caucasians. The output shows that the mean for Caucasian respondents is 1.9449 and for non-Caucasians is 1.9472. The means are very close to each other with a difference of 0.0023. For Caucasians, the mean is slightly stronger than the non-Caucasian category. Overall, the mean results show that both Caucasians and non-
Caucasians have relatively strong support for culturally sensitive social work practice as their values are both under 2.5, which is the neutral point. The probability value, or P statistic, for this t-test is .981, 98% (t-statistic -.024), thus not statistically significant since it is above 5% alpha level, and the results are likely due to chance. All assumptions are met on this test except that the sample is not random thus the findings need to be cautiously interpreted.

A second difference of means test was completed with the index of culturally sensitive social work practice and gender. The mean for females was 1.9643 and for males 1.9765. These two means are also not far apart from one another, however females show a slightly stronger response for culturally sensitive social work practice than males. Overall, both categories have a strong average for showing support for culturally sensitive social work practice, as their value is under 2.5. The probability value for this test is also quite high at .916, 92% (t-statistic .106), thus not statistically significant.

A third difference of means test was completed with the index of culturally sensitive social work practice and

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5 The standard error means are quite different for these two categories with 4.957E-02 for Caucasians and 8.701E-02 for non-Caucasians. This is due to the fact that the sample size between both groups is quite different, 42 for Caucasians and 18 for non-Caucasians. The higher the sample size, the less error there is. When there is a small sample size, it is more difficult to make conclusions from the data, as there are not a lot of responses on which to base findings.

6 The assumptions that need to be met are that the sample is random, the sample size is over 30, there is a normal distribution, there is constant variance, and the population mean is zero.

7 There is a large difference in the standard error means as the numbers vary a lot, females being 55 and males 10. As a result, one has to be cautious to make interpretations with such a small sample for males.
education. The mean for BSW respondents is 1.9602 and for MSW is 1.9231. There is a slight difference here. It appears that MSW respondents are a little more supportive of culturally sensitive social work practice than BSW respondents. The probability value for this test is .749, 75% (t-statistic .321), thus not statistically significant.

REGRESSION TESTS

Regression tests were then completed with the index of culturally sensitive social work practice to determine correlations between variables. I first tested this concept with respondent’s years of post-graduate experience. The scatter plot shows that there is a normal distribution and that there are no major problems with the regression. There is one extreme influential case which scores close to 3.5 for culturally sensitive social work practice, meaning that this case does not support this type of practice. Overall, however, the responses appear to be distributed evenly across years of experience. Overall, there are more respondents with 10 years and less work experience. Also, there are more responses showing less support for culturally sensitive social work practice with 10 years and less work experience. The R square value is 0, meaning that there is no change in the y variable, culturally sensitive social work practice, as explained by the

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8 The standard error mean has a large difference between the two categories due to the sample size, Bachelor of Social Work being 45 and Master of Social Work being 10.
x variable, post-graduate years of work experience. The beta value shows the strength of the relationship. The value is .018, which shows that there is not a strong relationship between the two variables as the value is close to 0. The probability value is .910 (t-statistic .114), meaning that the relationship is not statistically significant.

A second regression test was completed with the index concept of culturally sensitive social work practice and age of the respondent. The results show that as age increases, support for culturally sensitive practice increases minimally. The R square value is .037, meaning that only 3.7% of variance in y, culturally sensitive social work practice, is explained by x, age. This illustrates that there are other indicators for this relationship. The P value is .121 (t-statistic -1.57), which shows that the relationship is not statistically significant and the results are also likely due to chance.

I then used both variables (multiple regression), age and years of work experience, and controlled for one, to observe which variable affects culturally sensitive social work practice more than the other. The R square change value for age was .069 and for years of experience .073, meaning that years of experience explains a little more variance in culturally sensitive social work practice than age, since it is closer to 1. The slope for age is negative, (-.165), meaning that as age
increases, the index of culturally sensitive social work practice decreases. The P value for this variable is .017 (t-statistic -2.51), which is less than 5%, thus statistically significant. The slope for years of work experience is .115, meaning that as years of work experience increases so does the value of culturally sensitive social work practice. The P value for this variable is .080 (t-statistic 1.79), thus not statistically significant. The relationship between age and culturally sensitive social work practice is moderately strong when we add a third variable, with the beta value being -.515 compared to .370 for years of work experience.9

ANOVA

Another statistical test referred to as Anova compares means across and within categories and variance. To do this test, the independent variable education level was re-coded into a dummy variable. The b or y-intercept is the mean score of the y or DV (culturally sensitive social work practice), which is 1.960. The slope is the difference between the reference category, MSW, and the other category of the dummy category, which is BSW. MSW respondents scored .03709 lower

9 Parsimony refers to ensuring that a model has no more parameters than are necessary to adequately represent the relationship. A good indicator of parsimony is a non-decreasing adjusted R square value. If it keeps decreasing, the model is too complicated. Adjusted r square adjusts for complexity of model. To test for parsimony, x-variables need to be tested to observe the adjusted r square. I have tested two x variables with one another. The adjusted R square value for age is .045 and for years of work experience is .097. There does not appear to be a problem of parsimony, as the adjusted r square does not decrease. It appears that this model is not too complicated. Multicollinearity refers to when the explanatory variables are highly correlated with one another and no one has much unique explanatory power. There does not appear to be a problem of multicollinearity as the correlation between these two variables is .683, which is a high value, however they do not correlate to a near perfect relationship being one.
than BSW respondents to the DV culturally sensitive social work practice. The P value is .749 (t-statistic -.321), which is above 5% meaning that the relationship between education and culturally sensitive social work practice is not statistically significant. The F statistic is used to test the model and its significance and says that the mean difference (slopes) between those with a Bachelor of Social Work and Master of Social Work should be 0. In the case this is not true since it is .103. A one-way Anova test was completed and the F and P values are the same as those from the regression results, meaning that either test can be used for the same results. Both of these tests were completed to test the model and its significance and to further determine if the means and slopes are equal between categories.

**CONDITIONAL EFFECT PLOT**

A conditional effect plot is a scatter plot that shows the relationship between measurement x (IV) and y (DV) variables at different levels of a nominal x variable. The first scatter plot, figure 6.16, shows the relationship between the index variable of culturally sensitive social work practice, the age of the respondents and gender. The results are that the two slopes are not equal and very different for males and females as the y-intercept falls a lot higher for men than females on the scale for culturally sensitive social work practice. The y-intercept for younger males is around 2.4
however this decreases to about 1.7 as age increases for males. This is a sharp decline indicating that older men support culturally sensitive social work practice more than younger males. These results have to be interpreted cautiously as the sample size for males is low. The y-intercept for younger females falls just above 2 and to just fewer than 2 as age increases for females. There is a slight difference as age increases with support for culturally sensitive social work practice slightly increasing. The slopes for the male and female respondents are very different from one another. The males support for csswp changes drastically with age, whereas it does not for females. The slope for males is positive, meaning that as age increases for males, support for csswp increases. The slope for females is also positive, meaning that as age increases for females so does support csswp slightly.
Table 6.16 Conditional Effect Plot of Index of CSSWP, Age & Gender

The second conditional effect plot, figure 6.17, shows the relationship between the index variable of culturally sensitive social work practice, years of post-graduate work experience and gender. It shows that the slopes for men and women are relatively equal and is positive. The y-intercept for both slopes falls at approximately 1.9 for culturally sensitive social work practice and relatively stays the same as years of work experience increases for both genders. As a result, both genders show a relatively strong support for culturally sensitive social work practice.
Figure 6.17 Conditional Effect Plot of Index of CSSWP, Years of Post-Graduate Work Experience & Gender
In this section, I will discuss the research findings in more detail and will explain the relationships between the independent and dependent variables in my sample and discuss the findings in relation to the theoretical literature and past research noted above. The findings suggest overall, regardless of age, gender, ethnic/cultural background, education level, and work experience, that culture is important to the social workers in the sample and they feel that it should be important in social work practice. There is also general agreement that the social workers in the sample do not feel confident to carry out culturally appropriate social work practice and that this should be addressed through specialized training. There are, however, some discrepancies and surprising results that will be discussed later, and it appears that this may be a result of confusion of the definition and meaning of culture, a lack of understanding, and ultimately a lack of education and training on culturally appropriate social work practice.

There is a significant amount of literature on how to teach culturally appropriate social work practice and theories that describe this type of practice. However, it appears from the research results that there is a gap between this
information and actually carrying out this type of practice. It appears, from the research results and from what the social workers in the sample are commenting, that they are not learning enough about the relevance and influence of culture to carry out this type of practice appropriately and on a regular and consistent basis.

I will begin by discussing the demographic information of the respondents in more depth. It is not surprising that the majority of the respondents were female given that the social work field is considered a helping profession, which is generally comprised of more female workers than males. It is also important to note that a majority of the respondents have a Bachelor of Social Work degree. The respondent’s education consists of a BSW, MSW (Master of Social Work), and other degrees. Accordingly, it is reasonable to conclude that since a large number of respondents hold a BSW degree, they are not learning enough about culturally appropriate social work practice at the school education level in their BSW curriculum’s. It is also important to recognise that those with “other” degrees are also not learning about this type of practice. Those with different education backgrounds than a BSW or MSW may not learn about the concept of culture or its meaning in practice at all, whereas students in a BSW and MSW curriculum may be learning a little. These results are in
accordance with the literature, which asserts that there is a gap between education and actual culturally appropriate social work practice (Boyle & Springer, 2001, 54). Knowing this information then suggests that the education should be provided by both schools of social work and agencies that social workers are employed with, the Ministry for Children & Family Development, to address this concern.

Furthermore, it is also important to note that only a small percentage of the respondents are under 30 years of age and approximately half of them have ten years or less work experience. From my observations in the field, I would have assumed that there would have been more respondents under the age of 30 since there is a high staff turnover rate. However, half of the respondents have been working up to ten years, and thus are not new to the field. It is also very interesting to see that a considerable number of the respondents are Caucasian. I say interesting because I chose to complete the survey in the South Fraser Region of Vancouver which has a very highly culturally/ethnically diverse population (Canada, Statistics Canada. The survey results show that there are only a small percentage of culturally/ethnically diverse social workers in a highly diverse community. Being aware of this should further motivate the MCFD to teach culturally appropriate social work practice. To ignore this is to ignore
diversity and take part in practice that serves the mainstream culture's values and norms and take part in inappropriate social work practice (Middleman & Wood, 1993, 136).

Also, the results from when social workers were asked to choose items they considered to be a part of culturally sensitive social work practice were interesting as a majority of them did not choose recognizing that a person/family may know what is best for them, and that there may be experiences of oppression. As the literature indicates, these two factors are essential to this type of practice (Saleebey, 1997, 40). Literature also notes that the majority of people from culturally different backgrounds than the mainstream culture experience all kinds of direct and/or indirect oppressions, discriminations, prejudices, and biases (Middleman & Wood, 1993, 137). From these results, it is apparent that recognizing oppression and all of its characteristics and the results that come from it is not a priority for social workers in the sample. Clients who have experienced oppression need others to also recognize this, as it is a part of a person's identity. "Culture is the means by which we receive, organize, and understand our particular experiences in the world, and this includes oppression" (Saleebey, 1994, 351).

Also, it is concerning that a majority of the social workers from the sample do not feel that a person or family may
know what is best for them. This brings forward the notions of domination and subordination. This finding can mean that the majority of the social workers in the sample may believe that there is one way of knowing and living, most probably the Western world’s way since the majority of the respondent’s are Caucasian, and may carry out their social work practice to reflect this. If the Western world’s knowledge and ways of life are viewed as universal, social workers then use this knowledge to direct clients and their lives (Bogo & Herington, 1986, 58). This method of practice does not involve being culturally sensitive.

Working from a culturally appropriate point of view means to respect that a person or family is living the way they know how, and that most people know what is best for them, however may not have the means, knowledge, information, understanding, or support to be there. Most people know what is best for them and to not acknowledge this is to ultimately disrespect them (Dewees, 1999a, 101). This is in accordance with several of the theories that were discussed above, especially narrative theory because it holds the notion that the only way to carry out social work practice is by “hearing” the client’s story (Saleebey, 1997, 35). This “hearing” is accomplished by asking clients what their experiences have been, learning of historical information, family information, and what they need
and/or desire (Saleebey, 1994, 353).

I carry out practice in this manner and I believe that it leads to more effective practice than not using a culturally appropriate method. When I first began working in the field, I followed the Western-like standards of practice of my agency. These include telling clients what is appropriate and should be done in their situations, assuming to know what it right for clients, asking clients to change their circumstances to reflect Western values such as appropriate residential spaces, sleeping arrangements, medical care, discipline methods, and so on. I soon realized that this method of practice was not appropriate when working with clients from minority or diverse groups. I recognized this as a result of not having good working relationships with clients, clients not understanding my requests, and clients situation not becoming improved as a result of my involvement with them.

I began to feel frustrated with my practice and results and also found that my clients were also feeling this way as they were telling me this. As a result, I changed my methods of practice to be more inclusive of difference, hold the view that there is not only one way of knowing, to listen and hear clients stories, and other culturally appropriate methods of practice. Clients have also informed me that a non-culturally sensitive approach to practice is not in their best interests.
The client's best interests should be the social work profession's interest. To date, I have found that clients and my experiences have improved to a great extent with a culturally appropriate practice method.

In addition, a very large majority of social workers from the sample was familiar with the concept of "culturally sensitive social work practice". This response is a positive one at first, although not when examined with responses such as the above that illustrate that social workers do not readily recognise oppressions or acknowledge that a client knows what is best for them. It may be that the meaning of the concept of culture may not be fully understood by social workers. Forty-four percent of social workers from the sample felt that the literature is considerate of diversity and 35% felt that it is not. A small percentage of the respondents who hold a BSW degree said that they did not learn about diversity during their BSW education. As stated earlier, there is a great deal of literature on diversity. This poses the question, what materials are being used in educational settings and by employers, such as the Ministry for Children & Family Development, to teach and discuss diversity? Are the materials being used enough, thorough and appropriate? Those respondents who said that they are familiar with diversity said that they learned about it most from books/texts, the work environment,
and colleagues. It seems that there are some workers who feel that they do learn about it, while others do not. Thus, it is apparent that diversity is discussed in the workplace setting, but it is unknown to what extent.

It is also important to note that not a majority of the respondents felt that workplace training was a source of learning about diversity. This is important for the Ministry to be aware of, as its training should reflect this type of practice. This result implies that this type of training is not consistently or adequately provided by the MCFD, as there are a considerable number of social workers that do not refer to workplace training as a source of learning about diversity.

Furthermore, a large majority of the social workers from the sample feel that cultural diversity is a consideration in their practice. When respondents were asked how important diversity is in their practice, a large majority did not say it was "very important". The key word here is consideration in practice. It is apparent then that the majority of social workers in the sample feel that they do carry out culturally sensitive practice, although not on a regular or consistent basis. This finding is concerning as it directly indicates that this essential practice is not taking place on an essential basis.

It is also relevant to note that the majority of the
respondents who agreed that cultural diversity is important have had ten years or less work experience. This is probably due to the fact that the concept of cultural relevance in social work practice is a relatively recent one in terms of importance. Since the social workers that have responded to my survey have worked from less than five years to over fifteen years, it is important to provide training to those who have not had much recent education around this topic, specifically those who have worked in the field longer and have not had recent training.

Another finding that is surprising is that only a small percentage of the social workers in the sample felt confident that they were prepared to carry out culturally sensitive social work practice. This is a poor response. A question that this study attempts to answer is why do only a small number of social workers feel prepared to carry out this type of practice and what needs to be done to make it happen on a regular basis? This result illustrates that social workers are not being well prepared for culturally sensitive practice in their educational settings. A common assumption made is that graduate level education advances a person’s analytical and theoretical study of social work allowing students to deepen their understanding of the methods and context of practice, including cross-cultural social work practice. The findings contradict this
assumption, as many of the respondents with a MSW education are not confident in this type of practice.

Furthermore, only a very small percentage of the social workers from the sample "strongly agreed" that non-culturally sensitive social work practice is a problem in the social work field. Thus, the social workers in the sample either assume that culturally appropriate practice is taking place to its fullest extent, or to a reasonable extent, or feel that it does not need to be a priority in practice. It appears that many social workers in the sample do not view this type of practice as a priority as many have indicated that they do not consider it in their practice. To strengthen this assertion, more than half of the respondents felt that a person or family's culture might be irrelevant to the matters at hand. This is an alarming response. The basis of culturally sensitive social work practice is appreciating culture. Culture encompasses values, beliefs, norms, ideas, and ways of life, customs, and everything inclusive of everyday life and activities. As the literature states, culture is relevant at all times (Saleebey, 1994, 354), and it is also ever changing (Laird, 2000, 100).

Another finding that I found quite disturbing is that when asked about their work conditions, a noteworthy number of respondents felt that working from a culturally sensitive point of view is time-consuming and cannot always be a priority.
Regardless that this is not the majority of respondents, it is still a blatant response that needs to be addressed. This point of view can imply a quick solution focussed approach where the worker tells the client what is right, wrong, and what should and needs to be done to try and rectify the situation. It is one thing to provide information to clients based on one’s successful experiences, but another to enforce one’s or an agency’s incongruent and oppressive values and beliefs. As the literature indicates, social workers need to reflect on their own values, where they come from, how they impact others and their practice, and to always be actively aware of them (Laird, 2000, 101). Proper training to ensure that social workers do not hold traditional Eurocentric views and influence their practice with them is essential. Otherwise, these types of views are then directed towards clients and case practice. Social workers are working with those in need of help, those who are already experiencing barriers, disrespect, oppressions and injustices. They do not need to be further unjustified by social workers actions or ignorance as a result of an absence of appropriate and adequate training around culturally appropriate practice.

As mentioned earlier, it is also interesting to note that the majority of non-Caucasian respondents disagreed with the statement that a culturally appropriate practice approach can
be time-consuming and not always a priority. As also mentioned earlier, social workers from culturally different groups from the mainstream culture may carry out culturally sensitive social work practice as they may empathize with others who are different as they are from mainstream society. It was also found that those who disagreed with this statement have ten years or less work experience. Again, this may be due to the fact that these people have had some more recent training around culture and diversity since they are more recent graduates than those who have been working in the field longer. Also of interest is that all of the respondents who agreed with the statement that this type of practice can be time-consuming and not a priority were all Caucasian. This finding can suggest that non-Caucasian persons empathize with others who are not a part of the majority culture due to similar feelings and experiences. It may be that non-Caucasian workers acknowledge diversity to a greater extent due to their own diversity from the mainstream culture and also their ability to empathize with other minority people, families, and groups. Also, it may be that non-Caucasian workers feel more prepared to carry out culturally sensitive social work practice than the Caucasian ones due to having similar experiences as minority clients.

Assimilation refers to, "the process by which one cultural group is absorbed by another" (Kellen, 1956, 18). This concept
could also mean complete disappearance into the mainstream society without being recognized, for example complete cultural loss (Kellen, 1956, 18). It was originally thought by the researcher that the Caucasian respondents would feel that assimilation does not take place due to assuming a respected multicultural society, and that the non-Caucasian workers would feel that it does. As predicted, a considerable number of the Caucasian respondents felt that assimilation does not take place anymore. However, also interesting is that half of the non-Caucasian workers agreed with this statement and the other half disagreed.

Another concerning finding is that only a small percentage of social workers feel supported in practicing culturally sensitive practice in their work environment. I ask why this is so? This is not a positive response. What is going on for these people and what are the barriers to carrying out this type of practice? On the contrary though, a majority of social workers feel that they work in a culturally diverse work environment. It would be interesting to further query this phenomenon.

Furthermore, only a little over half of respondents felt that social workers are well qualified to provide culturally appropriate practice. No one strongly agreed with this statement. Also, a majority of respondents felt that all social
workers should receive specialized training about culturally sensitive practice. It appears that social workers are asking for more training around culturally sensitive social work practice. This needs to be heard by the MCFD since it is serving the community. There is much literature that discusses ways to teach this type of practice.

A noteworthy percentage of respondents had no opinion to whether cultural diversity is important with immigrants to fit well in the Canadian Mosaic. Is it because they are unsure of the answer? This topic can be a sensitive one to reflect on and discuss. Because it is not easily or readily discussed, many people may not know how they feel about the subject matter, and thus do not have answers to questions regarding this subject.

Several independent variables were also compared with an index of culturally sensitive social work practice to determine how they varied on the index scale from 1 being very supportive of culturally sensitive social work practice and 4 not being supportive at all. It was initially thought that support for culturally sensitive social work practice would vary between Caucasian and non-Caucasian social workers. The results do not show this. The results show that both groups are extremely close to one another and show strong support for culturally sensitive social work practice. Males and females are also very
close to one another in their support for this type of practice. Social workers with a Bachelor of Social Work and Master of Social Work education are also very close to one another and their support for culturally sensitive social work practice, however those with a Bachelor of Social Work degree are slightly more supportive.

The results for the regression tests show that years of work experience do not have an effect on culturally sensitive social work practice. Age, however, has a minimal effect in that as age increases support for culturally sensitive social work practice increases slightly. When both variables are controlled, however, years of work experience explain a little more variance in culturally sensitive social work practice than age.

In addition, some findings were contradictory. For example, those who agreed with the statement that culture may be irrelevant in some practice situations agreed that non-culturally sensitive social work practice is a problem in the field, and vice versa. I am unsure as to why this type of discrepancy exists.

Last, but not least, themes that emerged from the research results are that there appears to be a gap between education and culturally sensitive social work practice, and as a result there is a lack of culturally competent social workers. It can
be understood that culturally sensitive social work practice is not taking place on a consistent basis by the social workers in the sample due to the study’s findings.

These findings are extremely relevant for the literature on the subject matter as more studies need to be conducted to determine the extent to which this type of practice does not take place in the field, why, what the barriers are, and then to provide social work educational institutions and organizations feedback for positive change.

The theories discussed in this paper illustrate the importance of the concept of culture and culturally appropriate practice. However, the responses from the social workers in the sample illustrate that this type of practice does not appear to be a priority of the MCFD, its policy developers, educators/trainers, managers and practitioners. The research results explicitly illustrate that the knowledge and skills appropriate for this type of practice are not readily known to social workers in the field due to lack of education and communication.
CHAPTER EIGHT
CONCLUSION

The main objective of this thesis was to determine what present day social workers in the field know of culturally sensitive social work practice, and what their skills, opinions and biases are around this type of practice. I chose to study this subject matter to determine if culturally sensitive social work practice is taking place in the field, to offer some explanations for what I discovered and to make some suggestions for change if needed. For example, do social workers know of culturally appropriate social work practice, and what do they know about it, how is this type of practice being carried out by social workers in the field; if it is not being carried out, why not; and what is needed for this type of practice to be carried out consistently?

I also wanted the respondents, by participating in the survey, to have an opportunity to reflect on their own values, beliefs, and cultures. People may not realize that they have a culture, which may be due to their defining or limiting culture to race or ethnicity. It was my hope that the social workers in the sample would be able to understand that everyone has a culture when it is referred to as a way of life, inclusive of a
person's values, beliefs, traditions, customs, and other areas of a person's life. By becoming more aware of their own culture and how it impacts their own attitudes and beliefs, I hoped that social workers would become more aware of the impact that culture has on their clients and social work practice.

As found in my review of the literature, a majority of past studies conclude that culturally sensitive social work practice is rare or does not take place for various reasons. Some of the reasons included lack of education/training and/or cultural bias. My research study also found lack of education/training and/or cultural bias as barriers to this type of practice. Thus, it adds to the growing evidence that there is a significant problem in the field of social work regarding culturally sensitive social work practice that needs to be addressed by the Ministry For Children & Family Development, its management, policy makers, trainers and practitioners.

There appears to be a gap between culturally sensitive social work education and practice. Social workers from the sample are saying that they are learning little information about culture and culturally appropriate practice from the Ministry's training. They say that it is not sufficient and it is not helping them enough when working with diverse clients. In addition, the social workers, in their comments, suggest
that they have difficulty recognising when a client is oppressed, likely because the client, given the power dynamics of worker/client relations, is reluctant to or incapable of indicating how they feel in this regard. Social workers not only require the proper knowledge, training, and skills to carry out culturally appropriate social work practice, but also need to have insight, intellect, and the ability to empathise with, appreciate and understand difference.

Studies conducted in the United States found similar results and have concluded that, with reference to culturally appropriate services, there is a gap between education and the provision of those services (Boyle & Springer, 2001, 53) which are likely due to the lack of cultural specific training (Chau, 1990, 249). As the literature indicates, oppression is a major experiential aspect in most minority cultures and an important factor in social work practice. "Learning about cultures can teach us how to ask good questions in a way that helps to surface our clients' cultural meanings" (Laird, 2000, 101).

Another one of my research objectives was to determine the extent of culturally sensitive social work practice in the field. Based on the research I conducted, clients do not appear to be serviced in a culturally sensitive manner on a consistent basis, according to the perspectives of the social workers in the survey. According to the Ministry for Children & Family
Development's Child, Family & Community Service Act service delivery principles (2002), "services should be planned and provided in ways that are sensitive to the needs and the cultural, racial and religious heritage of those receiving services" (9). This principle does not appear to be fulfilled in the sample represented in this study. Although this study does not establish how widespread the problem is within this province, there is definitely a problem related to a lack of and inadequate education, training, support in the workplace related to cultural competence, and a lack of confidence by practitioners.

Other research objectives were to determine the importance of and perceptions of culturally sensitive social work practice in the field by social workers. Overall, the social workers in the sample are saying that appreciating culture and culturally sensitive social work practice are important to them and that it should be important in social work practice. This appreciation has been identified by them as recognising the values, beliefs, customs and norms of a client; recognising language barriers and using an interpreter; recognising that a client may be part of a larger family/community; recognising that a client may know what is best for him or her; recognising that a client may experience oppressions; listening and hearing the client's story; and
recognising and using a client's strengths. Participants were referred to these elements of appreciating culture in the questionnaire they were given.

However, they are also saying that they do not feel confident in carrying out this type of practice due to lack of knowledge and training, and indicated that more specialised training is required regarding this type of practice to work with diverse clients. Some social workers suggest in their comments that the Ministry for Children & Family Development's policies and standards of practice are not inclusive of cultural diversity as they are based on Western beliefs and norms, and these policies and standards do not allow the time to carry out this type of practice due to workload issues. This study did not ask the social workers to elaborate on the policies and standards that are not inclusive of cultural diversity. This can be an area for further research.

However, it is also important to note that 39% of social workers from the sample express that diversity is not "very important" in their practice with clients, and 56% of the social workers feel that culture "may be" irrelevant to the matters at hand. Furthermore, Twenty-six percent of the social workers feel that working from a culturally sensitive point of view is time-consuming and cannot always be a priority. The reasons for the former finding may be because social workers
may perceive that they do not have many clients from a minority cultural background, or that they are unable to recognize to what extent a cultural understanding of clients plays a vital part of their practice. To rule out the first possibility, from my experience on the front line in the South Fraser Region, it is unlikely that social workers are not coming into contact with or working with many clients from minority and diverse cultural backgrounds. Thus, from the received responses, it can be concluded that a significant number of social workers from the sample do not feel that culture, diversity and oppression are "essential factors" in social work practice, but that they can be considered in social work practice.

Social workers from the sample are also saying that they are feeling "somewhat" supported to carry out this type of practice in their work environments. This suggests that cultural diversity is likely not being discussed in the workplace. If cultural diversity is not acknowledged or discussed in the workplace, practitioners are not going to feel comfortable to talk about it or even carry out this type of practice, as they may appear to be practising differently from the norm of Western social work practice.

A general research objective for this study was to determine social workers' knowledge of culturally sensitive social work practice. "The notion that a client may know what
is best for him/her is an important one in culturally sensitive social work practice" (Dewees, 1999a, 99). Fifty-eight percent of the social workers from the sample do not feel that a client may know what is best for him/her. This is a significant number of social workers who may not approach their social work practice with clients through a narrative or personal approach. Other approaches that may be used include assuming to know what is best for a client and making decisions and changes for them instead of with them. This approach is not inclusive of cultural diversity.

When practitioners are not carrying out practice from a culturally sensitive point of view, they are contributing to the client’s lack of power and their subordinate position within society by using methods of practice clients are not familiar with and may not understand. As some literature asserts, “those without power are forced to accept the meanings given to their experiences by those with more power” (Middleman & Wood, 1993, 130). The needs of clients are not being satisfied when practice is not culturally sensitive. The needs of clients include respect, truth, sincerity, the ability to respect their experiences and circumstances, the ability to acknowledge and appreciate difference, and the ability to respect, recognise or understand oppression (Laird, 2000, 101). This list includes general needs for all clients, and specific
needs for cultural minorities. Social workers and clients are not likely forming genuine, trusting or effective working relationships due to unequal relationships. Some writers have made assertions about worker/client relationships. "Clients do not have equal voice in shaping their personal narratives, nor do clients have equal opportunities to have their particular stories prevail" (Laird, 2000, 107). If clients view workers as holding all the power to make decisions for them, this can result in hostile, disrespectful and ineffective relationships between them. In the research I conducted, some social workers state that in some practice situations they compel clients to make changes by telling them to do so or there will be consequences. On the other hand, the social workers state that in other situations they try to force clients to make changes, but the clients choose not to do so.

The result of social workers not carrying out culturally appropriate social work practice is that clients may not be fully respected or provided with effective service. If social workers are subtly imposing different values, beliefs and norms than clients’, oppression and subordination is taking place. Many clients have already experienced various oppressions and this type of practice only further oppresses the client (Laird, 1993). "Practitioners need to relinquish the traditional role of professional expert through the recognition of clients as
more appropriate authorities on their own lives and cultures" (Laird, 1993, 80).

Many negative consequences arise when social work practice does not reflect the client’s values, beliefs and norms. Clients can be confused because of a lack of understanding between themselves and the practitioner due to different cultural backgrounds. There may be language barriers and difficulty in communication. They may be forced to change certain circumstances due to the imposition of dominant Western values and beliefs (Middleman & Wood, 1993, 131). Clients may fear the Ministry system, and as a result change their situation to reflect what the social worker is asking for, even though they may not feel it is necessary.

Clients may be for example forced to relocate residences for a larger space to accommodate the family and all of its members and to have “appropriate” Western sleeping arrangements, be compelled to attend a Western physician than an alternative medical practitioner or cultural healer, or enforced to change discipline methods to Western or seemingly more appropriate ones. Clients may not realise their rights due to confusion and/or fear, and give up their values and needs to a large government system. As a result of the imposition of dominant values, clients are forced to fit into the dominant culture (Middleman & Wood, 1993, 132). However, the ultimate
goal of social work practice is to assist people in using their own capacities to obtain needed resources (Bogo & Herington, 1986, 63). When these kinds of inappropriate actions towards clients are taking place by social workers, culturally insensitive social work practice is taking place. When social workers are carrying out this type of practice, it is probably a result of not having the knowledge around culture and diversity necessary for this type of appreciation.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR THE MCFD**

The research results have many implications for the Ministry for Children & Family Development. There needs to be discussions regarding this problem area among the Ministry: its management, policy developers, trainers, and practitioners. The Ministry’s current policies, standards of practice and principles state that services should be culturally sensitive. The discussions need to include how adequate training on culturally appropriate social work practice needs to take place for everyone in the Ministry to appropriately work with its diverse clientele.

The commitment to cultural competence and understanding of diversity on social work practice in the then Ministry of Social Services emerged as a result of the Report of the Minister's Staff Advisory Committee on Multiculturalism (Province of BC, 1992). A cultural competence workshop and a
training manual were the training resources developed out of that report. These two-day workshops were offered to all staff, not only social workers, within the Ministry in 1993/94, and it is unclear whether and why they were phased out. Other workshops and/or training such as the Discrimination Prevention series of workshops took its place. When I began working in the field in 1999, the Ministry had a cultural component included in its mandatory training at the Justice Institute of B.C. This was provided to social workers when they were first hired. There are sometimes opportunities to take further training on diversity, however they are minimal due to training budget cuts and there are limitations on the number of people who can attend. I asked the Ministry for Children & Family Development's current Diversity Manager what kind of cross-cultural training is presently available to social workers in the field. The diversity manager directed me to the South Fraser training contact and the diversity advisor for this information. They advised me that in the past there was diversity training but that it has not been offered in the past three years. I learned that the diversity advisors in the various regions have been supporting practice and staff on issues involving diversity. They also state that the training budgets have been reduced significantly over the past three years and as a result they have had to stop doing some of the
trainings that they were doing, not because they want to but because they do not have the funds to do them. They further state that the budgets are strictly controlled and what they have approval to offer for staff are programs related to legislation and mandate.

Other things provided to social workers regarding diversity and practice is a Ministry website (http://icw/mcf.gov.bc.ca/) that provides information such as diversity guidelines, a cultural responsive question and answer section, contact information for resource panel members, the roles and responsibilities and contact information of the diversity advisors, related papers, articles and events, employee profiles in diversity, information on culture grams and information on the Ministry's cultural competency framework.

However, many social workers from the sample mention that the training and information provided to them is general and vague in nature. The majority of social workers (70% from the sample) are not feeling confident in carrying out culturally sensitive social work practice for reasons such as a lack of knowledge, skills, training, or support in their workplace. This needs to be heard by the Ministry and change needs to be initiated.

The Ministry needs to initiate discussions with
practitioners regarding the policies, standards, workload and other issues that prevent them from carrying out culturally appropriate social work practice in order to receive feedback to make positive changes. These discussions can take place at training seminars, team meetings, or in other forums.

It appears from the information I was provided with, that budgetary cutbacks have had a serious impact on the cultural training that is intended to support social workers. In a climate where budgetary cutbacks seriously jeopardize the levels and quality of service provided to all clients, this is one more indication of how seriously clients, especially clients from minority groups are affected. Budget changes need to take place to include regular training regarding culturally sensitive social work practice.

The Ministry needs to provide much more in-depth training on culturally appropriate social work practice. The respondents in this study that discuss the Ministry’s training say that it has been generic around diversity, culture and oppression and not specific. They are asking for more detailed information on different cultures. The social workers state they would prefer people from specific cultural groups to discuss their cultures with them so they can gain specific cultural knowledge and skills. Some of the respondent’s believe that this knowledge then becomes information directly from the cultural community
and can rid of assumptions and incorrect information. Some social workers that participated in this study state that social workers are mostly receiving cultural training from Caucasian practitioners, who may not learn the cultural information directly from the cultural community, and thus may have incorrect information. They may be learning about other cultures from secondary sources and the social workers that participated in this study feel that this is how problematic generalisations of cultural communities are made. The social workers believe that if there are people directly from the cultural community, they can discuss differences within that cultural community, and also what is appropriate and what is not when working with males, females, adults, children, during interviews, home visits, and so on. Overall, each family has its own way of life which should be obtained by asking the family questions. I recommend that culturally appropriate social work practice education/training should incorporate all of these views to incorporate a whole and thorough discussion regarding diversity, culture, oppression, stereotypes, and cultural competence.

This however does not mean that everyone from a particular culture is completely informed and possesses no misinformation. There is also great intra-group diversity. One can never assume common sets of meanings within any one grouping (Laird, 2000,
The request by the social workers in the sample for specific and detailed information on cultures implies that there is a fixed definition of culture when this is not the case. It is important to remember that culture is ever-changing for individuals, families, and groups (Laird, 2000, 104). In the light of this, training needs to focus on the dilemmas of learning cultural-specific information and the importance of recognizing how culture varies from person to person, and in each specific context and location. When a culture is viewed to be fixed, there are dangers of stereotyping people and groups. Stereotypes develop as a result of assuming that everyone from a particular culture is the same and that cultural information from the past is still true at the present time (Laird, 2000, 105). A good approach is to ask clients about their own culture and how they relate to it.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

There are several implications for further research from this study. In the present sample of social workers from the South Fraser Region, there are only a small percentage, 27%, of non-Caucasian social workers in a highly culturally/ethnically diverse community. It would be interesting to further study why this is so, as diverse practitioners would be assets to the field.

This study found that only a small percentage, 27%, of
social workers from the sample feel strongly supported in practising culturally sensitive social work practice in their work environment. This is not a positive response. The social workers in this study did not further explain why this is so. Further research is needed to find out why they feel this way. This would be an important research focus to further culturally appropriate social work practice in the field.

In this study, some findings were contradictory. For example those who agreed with the statement that culture may be irrelevant in some practice situations agreed that non-culturally sensitive social work practice is a problem in the field, and vice versa. It is unclear as to why this type of discrepancy exists. Further research could address this discrepancy.

There are reasons why social workers from a mainstream culture would have difficulty, despite their best intentions, practicing culturally appropriate social work practice. The Ministry for Children & Family Development is a Western-based institutional structure with a Western-based foundation for its policies and standards and this directly and indirectly impacts social work practice. The Western-based policies and standards are used with Western and non-Western clients. When these policies and standards are used with non-Western clients, they are being imposed on them. The clients most likely do not
understand the social work process and this gives rise to an unequal working relationship (Middleman & Wood, 1993, 133). Even if the Ministry is telling its social workers to carry out culturally appropriate social work practice, it is difficult to do so when the standards of practice or work environments do not reflect or support this type of practice.

In addition to institutional barriers, there are personal factors that prevent culturally appropriate social work practice from taking place. The social workers that are socialized in the Western world also hold Western values and beliefs. Also, social workers have their own personal biases that may not favor this type of practice. As a result of being socialized in the Western world, some social workers may feel that the Western world's way of life is superior to any others (Bogo & Herington, 1986, 60). As a result, there may be fear or hesitancy to believe in anything different. This does not mean that all Western beliefs and principles are negative, or that social work practice is black and white, either Western or non-Western practice, but that personal beliefs may inappropriately and negatively impact social work practice. Social workers should be educated to become more aware of their own values and beliefs and how these impact their practice. Once there is awareness, insight and change can take place. This discussion is not asserting that a Western approach is wrong and a non-
Western approach is right, but that awareness and insight of personal beliefs and diversity are recommended for effective culturally appropriate social work practice.

In terms of methodology, I chose to carry out this research study using a quantitative approach to try and obtain a large sample size in hopes of finding relationships among variables of culturally sensitive social work practice, making conclusions regarding this type of practice, and making suggestions for positive change. With founded relationships and conclusions, I wanted to provide effective feedback to the Ministry for Children & Family Development in hope of progressive change towards culturally appropriate social work practice. I use a quantitative approach to receive a large number of responses for more solid conclusions. I attempted to receive more in-depth feedback from the respondent's by including many open-ended questions within the questionnaire. Overall, I did receive a significant amount of in-depth comments. I am aware, however, that I would have received much more by using a qualitative research method such as personal interviews with social workers.

It is always a difficult decision about what research methods to use when conducting an investigation such as this, in particular related to a complex subject such as culture, and perceptions about culture among practitioners. I have explained
the reasons for my choice of a quantitative survey, and my awareness of its limitations. In particular, I have indicated in my conceptual framework my preference for social work practice that emerges from postmodern, narrative techniques and approaches as they lend themselves to the complexities and nuances of cultural sensitivity. The question thus arises as to why I did not pursue a narrative research methodology in this investigation. I wish to stress that this survey is a preliminary investigation that opens up the field for further study. My study now identifies specific areas for exploration in future studies with social workers in this field. The second phase of this work, or future research, would be well served by using narrative techniques to explore the questions that emerge from this study.

While there are many questions that have been identified for future investigation, overall, this research study revealed that the Ministry for Children & Family Development is not adequately educating or providing training for its social workers regarding diversity, culture, oppression and culturally appropriate social work practice. In the context of increasing diversity of the client population served by the Ministry, it is essential that social work practice be culturally appropriate to all clients and those from diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences if the Ministry is intent on
aligning its practice in the field to the ideals of its expressed principles.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


A Survey of Social Workers Concerning Culturally Appropriate Social Work Practice: Knowledge, Perceptions & Social Work Role

Section I

1. Culturally appropriate social work practice refers to: (Please indicate the 4 most important items that you consider to be a part of culturally sensitive social work practice by rating them 1-4. You may use the same number more than once if you feel there is equal importance. You may also write in your own values and rate them).

- Recognizing the values, beliefs, customs and norms of a person/family
- Recognizing language barriers and using an interpreter
- Recognizing that a person/family may be part of a larger family/community
- Recognizing that a person/family may know what is best for them
- Recognizing that a person/family may experience oppressions
- Listening and hearing the person’s/family’s story
- Recognizing and using a person’s/family’s strengths
- [Additional option]
- [Additional option]
- [Additional option]
- [Additional option]

2. Have you worked in any other city or town?

   __ Yes    __ No    If yes, name of city or town ____________________________

3. In comparison to places you have experienced before, is Vancouver a culturally diverse city? (Please circle appropriate number)

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<td>Somewhat diverse</td>
<td>A little diverse</td>
<td>Not diverse</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
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123
4. “Culturally appropriate social work practice” refers to a method of practice. Are you familiar with this term?

__ Yes  __ No

5. In social work literature, diversity refers to: ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, occupation, and status. Do you think social work literature adequately considers these matters?

__Yes  __ No  __ Don’t know

From where have you learned about diversity? (Please check any and all that apply)

> Bachelor of Social Work education
> Master of Social Work education
> Other undergraduate education
> Lectures/seminars
> Books/texts
> Work environment
> Training
> Colleagues
> Friends
> Television
> Newspapers/magazines
> Radio
> Other

From the list above, which items have been most influential to your learning about diversity? Please list 4 items in order of influence, from most influential to least.

Section II

6. Is cultural diversity a consideration in your practice?

__ Yes  __ No  __ Sometimes

If so, how important? (Please circle appropriate number)

1 2 3 4 5
Very Somewhat A little Not important No
Important Important important at all Opinion
7. How prepared are you to conduct culturally appropriate practice?

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What do you feel can help prepare, or better prepare, you? (Please list)

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8. Non-culturally appropriate practice is a problem in the social work field. (Please circle appropriate answer)

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9. There are some practice situations where a person's or family's culture is irrelevant to the matters at hand. (Please circle appropriate number)

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10. Cultural diversity is important, especially in the case of immigrants, because people have to fit well in the Canadian mosaic. (Please circle appropriate number)

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11. Working from a culturally sensitive point of view is time-consuming and cannot always be a priority. (Please circle appropriate number)

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12. Too much importance is placed on culture when discussing case practice in the social work field. (Please circle appropriate number)

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13. Assimilation may not be pursued as much as it used to be in Canadian society. (Please circle appropriate number)

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<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree somewhat</td>
<td>Disagree somewhat</td>
<td>Disagree strongly</td>
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14. You feel supported in practicing culturally appropriate social work in your work environment. (Please circle appropriate number)

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Explain,

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

15. Do you work in a culturally diverse work environment, referring to ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, class, education.

   _ Yes   _ No

If yes, how is it culturally diverse?

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

If no, how is it not culturally diverse?

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

How could it be made more culturally diverse? (Please list)

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________
Section III

16. Social workers are well qualified to provide culturally appropriate practice.

1 Strongly agree 2 Agree 3 Somewhat disagree 4 Disagree 5 No opinion

17. In your opinion, should all social workers receive specialized training about culturally appropriate practice?

__ Yes __ No __ Don’t know __ Maybe

Please explain your response.

________________________________________________________________________

Section IV

Please provide me with some demographic information.

Age: Under 30 ___ 30-39 ___ 40-49 ___ 50 and over ___

Gender: Male ___ Female ___

Education Level Bachelor of Social Work ___
Master of Social Work ___
Other ___ & please specify _________________

Years of post-graduate social work experience ___

Current work setting: Child Protection ___
Family Services ___
Youth Services ___
Intake ___
Aboriginal Team ___

Cultural/Ethnic Background _________________

Please do not put your name on this questionnaire. Thank you for your participation.
Question #7

What do you feel can help prepare, or better prepare, you to conduct culturally sensitive practice? Explain,

- More training and education
- Workshops
- Learning about other cultures and perspectives
- More information on communities served
- Target on educating on specific cultural groups rather than generic information
- Spend more time listening to people's stories
- Easy access about cultures
- Leadership from government, schools, management and more education about oppressive structures
- Workshops from different cultural groups to learn more about their perspectives of their communities
- To spend work time emerged in cultural communities
- To have "cultural consultants"
- Guest speakers
- Inclusion of cultural events
- Issues of cultural sensitivity discussed regularly with team
- Receiving feedback from the cultural groups impacted by practice
- More accessible information in office such as a library
- More resources for cultural groups
- With services, expectations and other MCFD protocol/legislation it is sometimes hard to practice in the most culturally sensitive way
- Access to skilled, qualified, multilingual service providers to do the work with the family once the initial assessment/investigation is completed, for example, support, education, therapy, addictions/mental health
- More culturally specific training, for example families from diverse backgrounds speaking directly about their values, beliefs, etc.
Question #14

You feel supported in practising culturally sensitive social work in your work environment? Explain,

- Budget cuts
- Not enough programs available for clients who are not able to attend conventional programs
- More men needed
- Recruitment of diverse social workers needed
- Not enough diverse cultural foster homes
- Workplace still very heterosexual
- Workload, adherence to time consuming standards, dominant beliefs and opinions prevent cultural sensitive practice
- Many professionals feel uncomfortable to work with people from different cultures
- There is a lack of community resources for social workers to refer the family to do the hands on work
- I do not feel that we are encouraged or given the time to pursue culturally sensitive investigations as the issues may require seeing the families at different times and more than once and this does not fit in with standard guidelines
- Workload volume prevents time available to provide sufficient time in order to practice in a culturally sensitive manner
- For example such questionnaires help people review their own practice
- Having people from different cultures working together on the same team promotes culturally sensitive social work
- Sometimes I experience having to fight the "rules" to deal with the reality
- Limited by systems problems, for example contracted agencies don't have workers who speak specific languages
Question #17

In your opinion, should all social workers receive specialized training about culturally sensitive practice? Explain,

- Better understanding and tolerance
- Culture is an integral part of every individual
- Current MCFD training is very general, not in depth
- Education is an excellent vehicle towards understanding
- Need to celebrate diversity, then training
- Training is too general
- The mandatory training of this sort has felt more like an exercise in political correctness and was insulting in how basic it was without addressing the complicated situations that social workers deal with in the field
- Culturally sensitivity should be inherent in basic training
- Social workers must be exposed to specialized training to have a better understanding of people they work with, their strengths and weaknesses and how they relate to their specific backgrounds
- Only having limited perspectives does not allow workers to experience the cultural reality that they will be faced with
- I believe that there is always room for improvement and people are experts on their own experiences no matter what culture they are and that should be considered. Training can also include clients who share their own personal experiences in relating to the culturally sensitive piece. We can only learn from talking to people who are experiencing our own work styles. Training sessions would always be helpful to keep people updated on what is going on around them and in their community. Professionals need to be aware at first hand what issues are effecting their communities, issues, which would eventually effect their work, and how they choose to deal with their clients
- Cultural diversity is basic to adequate social work practice, as well as successful human living
- A lot of the times social workers are ignorant about culturally sensitive issues, therefore refresher courses may be beneficial
- Training may be prescriptive, sort of a recipe card as to how to deal with people that belong to group a, b or c. I don't think it would be effective in this sense as things may be generalized to the whole community and may perpetuate stereotypes
- Social workers that are not trained may not be as culturally sensitive as other may be from diverse groups
- We need constant reminders about stereotyping problems

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In the area of social work we work with several cultures and need to be aware of their diversity in order to develop the best treatment plan for the family and individual. So that we can serve our clients better. Training is helpful, but people carry their personal biases and we are all only as sensitive as our background allows.